

LESSONS IN ISLAMIC HISTORY

Durūs fī at-Tārīkh al-Islāmī



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SHAYKH MUḤAMMAD
AL-KHUḌARĪ BAK AL-BĀJŪRĪ

Translated by
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Publisher's Foreword



IN THE NAME OF ALLAH, Most Merciful and Compassionate. I bear witness that there is no god but Allah alone, without partners, and that Muḥammad ﷺ is His servant and Messenger. I invoke the blessings and peace of Allah upon his final Messenger, Muḥammad, his family and companions, along with all those who follow them in goodness until the Day of Rising.

Lessons in Islamic History is a history book written for the sake of the present. It recounts Islamic history in concise form from the pre-Jāhiliyyah period up to the author's own lifetime in the Egyptian Khedivate during the Ottoman era. Its primary aim is to contribute to people learning from our rich Islamic heritage by enabling the reader to draw lessons from its history. As such, it is an excellent tool for teaching and particularly suitable as an introduction to Islamic history for young people, due to its composition in the form of forty-seven distinct lessons.

I would like to thank Muftī Abdur-Rahman ibn Yusuf Mangera, Director of White Thread Press, for recommending this book which he came across whilst studying in Syria, as well as *A History of the Four Caliphs* by the same author (also published by Turath).

Thereafter, I would like to thank the translator, Mariam Madge Conlan, for her careful and diligent translation, and Lina Qaisy, for providing the detailed topography.

Finally, I wish to thank the author for the opportunity of publishing this work. May Allāh forgive him and bless him with the

best of rewards and the highest status in the hereafter and unite us with him in *Jannah*. *Amin*.

YAHYA BATHA

Introduction



ALL PRAISE IS FOR Allāh, Lord of the Worlds. Peace and blessings be upon our master Muḥammad, and upon all of his family and Companions.¹

This book, *Lessons in Islamic History* by Shaykh Muḥammad Khudārī Bak, constitutes an abridged version of his series of works on Islamic history, which have enriched the Islamic library. He was a pioneer amongst his contemporaries in formulating a modern written account of Islamic history, in his clear and uncomplicated style, based on analysis that looked objectively at historical events but was nevertheless grounded in reality.

The importance of this work, [first published in 1909,] lies in extracting the essence of his books:

- *Nūr al-Yaqīn fī Sīrat Sayyid al-Mursalīn (The Light of Certainty in the Biography of the Master of the Messengers)*
- *Itmām al-Wafā' fī Sīrat al-Khulafā' (The History of the Four Caliphs)*
- *Muḥāḍarāt fī Tārīkh al-Umam al-Islāmiyyah (Ad-Dawlatayn al-Uma-wiyyah wa'l-ʿAbbāsiyyah) (Lectures on the History of the Muslim Nations—The Umayyad and ʿAbbāsid Dynasties)*

He added to these by summarising Islamic history from the end of the ʿAbbāsid era until his own time.

The book is divided into forty-seven distinct lessons. These begin with a discussion on the Arabian Peninsula, the origins of the Arabs and their civilisation, and their social circumstances before Islām.

Thereafter, the author presents the Prophetic Biography, followed by an account of the Rightly Guided Caliphate. He then treats the Umayyad and ‘Abbāsīd Dynasties up until their fall, after which he returns to those states and emirates which emerged during the Abbasid era, such as the Būyids, Saljūqs and Ṭūlūnids. He then presents the Mamlūk Dynasty, from its establishment to its decline, and finally touches on the history of Egypt from the beginning of its rule by the Ottomans until the Khedivate of ‘Abbās Ḥilmī II.

At the end of his discussion of each dynasty, the author draws the reader’s attention to the causes of its emergence and subsequent downfall, as well as the most important events and cultural phenomena of that era.

As such, the book is eminently suitable for young readers, whom it will enable to gain a comprehensive picture of their history—linking the present with the past and giving them the opportunity to contemplate the events and lessons of history. . .

I ask Allāh Most High to make this and all our deeds sincerely for the sake of His Noble Countenance. Truly, He is All-Hearing, Most-Responsive.

¹ This introduction is by Maḥmūd al-Bayrūtī, Editor of the Arabic Edition.

About the Author



MUḤAMMAD ibn ‘Afīfī al-Bājūrī, known as Shaykh al-Khuḍarī Bak, was a renowned Egyptian scholar of Sharī‘ah, Arabic literature and Islamic history. He was born and lived in Cairo (1289/1872) and, having graduated from the Dār al-‘Ulūm Madrasah, went on to become a luminary of his age as scholar, researcher, orator, educator and reformer.

He held a variety of distinguished posts as Islamic Judge in Khartoum, Instructor and Deputy Head of the Islamic Judicial School in Cairo, Professor of Islamic History at the University of Egypt (now the University of Cairo) and Inspector for the Egyptian Ministry of Education.

Perhaps his greatest legacy, however, lies in his valuable works on history, literature and Sharī‘ah, through which he has made much beneficial information garnered from primary sources accessible to the modern generations—opening for them a doorway to the authentic Islamic tradition in its purest form.

His writing style is distinguished by precision and simplicity, making his works excellent educational tools, as he surely intended. As a historian, he was scrupulously objective and as an educator, powerfully restrained. His friend, Professor Muṣṭafā Ṣādiq ar-Rāfi‘ī said of him: “As a scholar, he was like a writer; and as a writer, he was like a scholar.” Thus, he was a meeting point between these two worlds. Shaykh Khuḍarī Bak himself explained that he did not write merely to record history, but so that history might benefit. As such, he was a living bridge between past and present.

He passed away and was buried in Cairo in 1345/1927. May Allāh forgive him and shower him with His abundant Mercy.

Lesson One

THE ARABIAN PENINSULA

In West Asia lies what historians have named the Arabian Peninsula. It is bordered to the west by the strait of Bāb al-Mandab, the Red Sea and the Suez Canal; to the north by Syria (Shām) and the River Euphrates; to the east by the Euphrates and the Arabian Gulf; and to the south by the Indian Ocean.

It is divided into eight regions:

The first of these is Yemen, which lies in the south-west of the peninsula and includes cities such as Ṣan‘ā’, Saba’ and Ma’rib.

The second is Ḥaḍramawt in the south, which is surrounded by vast sand dunes known as *al-Aḥqāf*, after which Chapter (*Sūrah*) Forty-Six of the Noble Qur’ān was named.

The third region is Oman (‘Umān). It is situated in the south-east and its capital is Ṣuḥār.

The fourth is Bahrain (Baḥrayn), which lies between Basrah (Baṣrah) and Oman. Its capital is Hajar.

The fifth is Yamāmah (also known as Jaww² and ‘Arūd), situated west of Bahrain, the capital of which is Ḥujr.

The sixth is Najd, in the centre, which includes the cities of Riyāḍ and Ḥā’il.

Seventh is the Ḥijāz, which lies west of Najd and includes Makkah al-Mukarramah, al-Madīnah al-Munawwarah and Ṭā’if.

Finally, Tihāmah is found south of the Ḥijāz, on the west coast of the peninsula.

It is in this peninsula that the Arab people emerged.

ORIGINS OF THE ARABS

The Arabs are a Semite people, deriving from Sām ibn Nūḥ. They include nations which perished, of whom nothing now remains but their memory; and others which survived and whose history is a great one.

PERISHED ARABS (*AL-‘ARAB AL-BĀDIYAH*)

The most famous of the no-longer extant Arab nations are ‘Ād and Thamūd, in addition to Ṭasm and Jadīs.

‘Ād inhabited the sand dunes [of Yemen]. Allāh has related some of their history in the Noble Qur’ān, so that people might consider their condition. When they conducted themselves with overweening arrogance in the land, Allāh sent to them their kinsman, Hūd, to call them to worship Allāh and renounce their idol-worship. However, they ignored his call, so Allāh sent upon them a violent wind, which He imposed upon them for seven successive days and nights of calamity. They were eradicated without a trace.

Thamūd resided in Hijr, north of Madīnah. Allāh sent to them their kinsman, Ṣāliḥ, who said: ‘O people! Worship Allāh; you have none that is worthy of worship but Him.’ But they did not comply, so Allāh destroyed them by means of a blast (*ṣayḥah*) which rendered them like the dried-up twig fragments of an animal pen.

Ṭasm and Jadīs had their homes in Yamāmah. Their ruler, who was from Ṭasm, was violent and oppressive. When his oppression, injustice and iniquity worsened, a group from Jadīs conspired against him and his tribe, and killed them. None remained of Ṭasm except a single man who escaped and sought help from Ḥassān ibn

Tubbaʿa, King of Yemen. He returned with them to Jadīs and fought them until they were wiped out. Thus, the two tribes perished.

2 This was its name during the Time of Ignorance (*Jāhiliyyah*) until it was renamed after the woman [Zarqāʾ al-Yamāmah] from whom the name derived was killed (Bakrī, *Muʿjam maʾstuʿjam al-Bakrī*, 2:407).

Lesson Two

THE SURVIVING ARABS (*AL-‘ARAB AL-BĀQIYAH*)

As for those Arabs who survived, they are composed of two great peoples: Banū Qaḥṭān and Banū ‘Adnān.

PURE ARABS

The Qaḥṭānī people are also known as the Pure Arabs. Their founding father was Ya‘rub ibn Qaḥṭān, who is said to have been the first to have spoken Arabic and who settled in Yemen. During the time of Banū Saba’³—the grandson of Ya‘rub—these lands were one of the paradises of this world, about which Allāh says:

﴿لَقَدْ كَانَ لِسَبَإٍ فِي مَسْكَنِهِمْ آيَةٌ جَنَّتَانِ عَنْ يَمِينٍ وَشِمَالٍ كُلُوا
مِنْ رَزْقِ رَبِّكُمْ وَاشْكُرُوا لَهُ بَلَدَةٌ طَيِّبَةٌ وَرَبٌّ غَفُورٌ﴾

There was for [the tribe of] Saba’ in their dwelling place a sign: two gardens on the right and on the left. [They were told:] “Eat from the provisions of your Lord and be grateful to Him. A good land [have you], and a forgiving Lord.”

(34:15)


They also had a valley which would flood and for which they constructed a damn in order to retain the water and to protect themselves from the advancing floods. However, as time went by and they lived an increasingly luxurious lifestyle, the damn fell into ruin. Then Allāh sent upon them the Great Flood (*Sayl al-‘Arim*) which


destroyed their land such that it could no longer support them. Hence, many of their tribesmen left Yemen.

Those who left include: Ghassān, who migrated to the Syrian hills and settled there; Aws and Khazraj, who were descended from Azd, and who settled in Yathrib (Madīnah Munawwarah); and the sub-tribes of Lakhm, who settled in Ḥīrah, close to the River Euphrates.

Those tribes which remained in Yemen were: Ḥimyar, Madhḥij, Hamdān and Kindah.

ARABISED ARABS

The people of ‘Adnān are descended from Ismā‘īl ibn Ibrāhīm . Ibrāhīm had settled his son, Ismā‘īl, and the child’s mother, Hājar, in Makkah where he built the Sacred House (*Al-Bayt al-Ḥarām*). His descendents were many and formed a great people.

Banū Ismā‘īl are known as the Arabised Arabs, because their origin is Hebrew⁴. Ismā‘īl learnt Arabic from Jurhum, who inhabited the Ḥijāz. Amongst his descendents are the tribe of ‘Adnān, to whom the authentic lineage of our master, the Messenger of Allāh , is traced.

Ma‘ad ibn ‘Adnān had two sons, Rabī‘ah and Nizār. Amongst the most famous of Rabī‘ah’s descendants were the tribes of Bakr and Taghlib (the two sons of Wā’il), ‘Abd al-Qays and Banū Ḥanīfah. The best known of those descended from Muḍar [ibn Nizār] were Banū Tamīm, the tribes of Qays ‘Aylān, Hudhayl and Kinānah, from whom the sub-tribes of Quraysh were descended.

At first, the ‘Adnānians resided in the Ḥijāz, but many of them left when it became too cramped. Bakr and Taghlib moved north to the banks of the Euphraes; ‘Abd al-Qays went to Bahrain; Tamīm and the

tribes of Qays ʿAylān moved to Najd; and Banū Ḥanīfah went to Yamāmah.

The Ḥijāz was left to Quraysh, who were distinguished with serving the Sacred House. It became a secure sanctuary for them, in which they would seek refuge when afraid.

THE ARAB WAY OF LIFE

The Arabs can be divided into three categories in respect of their way of life: Bedouin [i.e. nomadic Arabs], settled Arabs and urbanised Arabs.

The Bedouin had no fixed abode, but would rather pursue pasture and grassy areas, moving on whenever the land became barren. They sought grazing land for their livestock, which constituted their main source of sustenance, as they drank their milk and ate their meat. The majority of the people of Najd fell into this category and were specifically called ‘desert Arabs’ (*Aʿrāb*)⁵.

The settled Arabs remained in certain areas. However, they did not construct buildings or structures, but rather lived in tents.

As for the urbanised Arabs, they dwelt in towns. It was these Arabs who had a civilisation before the coming of Islām; they included the Aqyāl Kings⁶.

³ Saba’ was the son of Yashjab ibn Yaʿrub ibn Qaḥṭān. Saba’ was his title (*laqab*) and his name was ʿĀmir (*Jumhurat Ansāb al-ʿArab*, p. 329).

⁴ This is the author’s view. Another opinion is that their origin was Chaldean Babylonian, because Sayyidunā Ibrāhīm was born in Babylon (Bābil) in Iraq. The Chaldeans were Semites, descended from Sām ibn Nūḥ, and are therefore cousins of the Arabs.

5 They dwelt in tents and lived on the milk and meat of their livestock; they had, by nature, a harshness about them.


6 Aqyāl, Adhwā' and Tabābi'ah were all titles of the kings of Yemen.

Lesson Three

ARAB CIVILISATION BEFORE ISLĀM

There was a great Arab civilisation in Yemen, Ḥīrah, Syria and the Ḥijāz.

In Yemen the seat of the king was at Ṣan‘ā’ and its occupants were the Aqyāl Kings of Ḥimyar (Ḥimyarites). The greatest of these was ‘Abd ash-Shams, whose title was Saba’. He was the grandson of Ya‘rub ihn Qaḥṭān and the building of the city of Ma‘rib and the Great Damn are attributed to him.

Amongst them were also Ḥimyar and his son. They were Ḥimyarites, or Adhwā’—so called because their titles began with ‘Dhū’ (Possessor of. . .), such as Dhū’l-Manār⁷ and Dhū’l-Az‘ār⁸. The Kings of Ḥimyar also included [Queen] Bilqīs, who lived contemporaneously with Sulaymān ihn Dāwūd , King of Banū Isrā’īl in Jerusalem. She visited him and he received her with honour; she accepted his Message and then returned to her country.

They also included the Tabābi‘ah, who trace their ancestry to their forefather, Tubba‘ the First. The last of these kings was Dhū Yazan al-Ḥimyarī, from whom the Abyssinians (Ḥabashah) took the lands of Yemen and ruled them for a period thereafter.

Abrahah was the second of these kings. It is he who attacked Makkah with the intention of destroying the Sacred House; but he was prevented by Allāh’s protection of His Sanctuary:

﴿وَأَرْسَلَ عَلَيْهِمْ طَيْرًا أَبَابِيلَ تَرْمِيهِمْ بِحِجَارَةٍ مِّن سِجِّيلٍ فَجَعَلَهُمْ كَعَصْفٍ مَّأْكُولٍ﴾

And He sent against them birds in flocks, striking them with
stones of hard clay; And He made them like eaten straw.

(105:3–5)

This incident was reported in historical accounts of the people of the Ḥijāz, who referred to it as ‘the Year of the Elephant’. This was because Abrahah had brought with him a great elephant, which Allāh restrained from entering Makkah.

During the reign of Masrūq ibn Abrahah, Sayf ibn Dhī Yazan arose and sought help from the ruler of Persia. He aided him with Persian forces, who fought under him until he had retained his kingdom and expelled most of the Abyssinians. However, a small number of Abyssinians were retained by Sayf ibn Dhī Yazan as servants, and they assassinated him. When Khosrow (*Kisrā*) [ruler of Persia] learnt of this, he sent a regent of his to assume governance of Yemen. Thus, when Islām came, Yemen was under Persian rule.

Yemen contained great palaces, such as Ghumdān Palace, situated on the outskirts of Ṣan‘ā’. Incorporating famous rooms, known as ‘niches’, it is an example of masterful construction and supreme workmanship.

The kings who ruled Ḥirah were from the Lakhmids (Banū Lakhm), one of the Yemeni tribes which had migrated after the Flood of ‘Arim. These Kings of Ḥirah were known as Manādharah and were clients of the Khosrows, rulers of Persia. Their greatest kings include Jadhīmat al-Abrash⁹, who killed the King of Arabia, ‘Amr ibn aḏ-Ḍarb, after catastrophic wars. ‘Amr’s daughter, Zabbā, then sought to exact revenge for her father’s death. She tricked Jadhīmah into entering her territory and then murdered him.

Another of the great kings of Ḥirah was Imru’ al-Qays, who built the palaces of Khawarnaq and Sadīr, two of the greatest examples of

Arab architecture.

Another of their famous kings was Nu‘mān ibn al-Mundhir, whose title (*laqab*) was Abū Qābūs, and who was killed by the Persian ruler, Abrawayz (Khosrow II Parvez). This was the cause of a famous battle between the Arabs and the Persians at Dhū Qār¹⁰, which took place a short time before the Prophet ﷺ was sent with Islām, and in which the Arabs were victorious. After Nu‘mān was killed, rule of Ḥīrah passed to Iyās ibn Qabiṣah aṭ-Ṭā’ī; it then returned to the family of Nu‘mān. The last of this line was Mundhir ibn an-Nu‘mān, whose title was Maghrūr.

Syria was ruled by the Ghassānids (Āl Ghassān), who were from Banū Qaḥṭān and had migrated from Yemen after the Flood of ‘Arim. The first of them to rule Syria was Jufnah ibn ‘Amr. It is he to whom the Ghassānids trace their ancestry, and they are therefore known as ‘Āl Jufnah.’

Jufnah built up Syria considerably. Thereafter, successive Ghassānid Kings continued to rule Syria, including Damascus (Dimashq) and its environs. Their civilisation expanded and they presided over great luxury. They were rivals of the Manādharah Kings of Ḥīrah, against whom they fought some famous battles with alternating success.

The last of these kings was Jabalah ibn al-Ayham, who accepted Islām during the reign of ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb. It is said that he was performing the Ḥajj during the reign of ‘Umar when, as he was circumambulating the Ka‘bah, a Bedouin trod on the edge of his robe, causing it to come undone. Jabalah struck the Bedouin, who then appealed to ‘Umar. ‘Umar told Jabalah that there must be either retaliation (*qiṣāṣ*) or compensation given to the Bedouin. This offended Jabalah and was one of the reasons for his return to

Christianity and flight to Constantinople, where he resided until his death.

The Ghassānid Kings ruled over the Syrian Arabs as clients of the Caesars, rulers of the Byzantine Empire.

In the Ḥijāz, leadership belonged to Quraysh, although they were not called kings. Quraysh were the offspring of Fīhr ibn Mālik ibn an-Naḍr ibn Kinānah. They were composed of many sub-tribes, the largest and greatest of which was Banū ‘Abd Manāf ibn Quṣay.

‘Abd Manāf had four children: Ḥāshim¹¹, ‘Abd Shams, Nawfal and Muṭṭalib.

Ḥāshim was the father of ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib, the grandfather of the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ. His children include ‘Abbās, to whom the ‘Abbāsids trace their ancestry; and Abū Ṭālib, the father of ‘Alī, from whom the ‘Alawites claim descent. ‘Abd Shams’ son, Umayyah, is the ancestor of the Umayyads.

Within Quraysh, leadership lay with Banū ‘Abd Manāf.

Quraysh conducted trade in Syria and Yemen. They would make two annual outings: to Yemen in the winter and to Syria in the summer. Allāh Most High mentions these two outings in *Sūrat Quraysh*, [and how He would] bestow blessings upon them by feeding them, thus saving them from hunger, and by securing them from fear.

There also existed in Arabia other kings of lesser importance than those aforementioned.

The remaining Arab tribes, however, had no kings, but were ruled by chiefs, shaykhs and arbitrators. The more commanding the chief was, and the stronger his support and greater his wealth, the more he would be respected and obeyed. This was true to the extent that in some cases, when the chief became angry, the whole tribe would arise—without enquiring as to the cause of his anger.

There are many examples of such tribal chiefs, some of whom were leaders of a number of tribes. In terms of power, they were close to being kings, even if they did not resemble kings in terms of luxury or civilisation.

7 His actual name was ‘Āmir, as Ibn Ḥazm mentions in *Jumhurat al-Ansāb*.

8 His name was Abrahah ibn al-Ḥārith ar-Rā’ish (*Jumhurat Ansāb al-‘Arab*, p. 438).

9 Or: Jadhīmat al-Abraṣ. He is: Ibn Mālīk ibn Fahm ibn Ghanam. He was also called: Waḍḍāḥ.

10 The ḥadīth about the Battle of Dhū Qār will appear in the discussion on Arab character.

11 Hāshim was his title (*laqab*); his name was ‘Amr. His mother, ‘Ātikah bint Murrah, was also the mother of ‘Abd ash-Shams and Muṭṭalib. Hāshim was responsible for providing the pilgrims to Makkah with food and water. This remained the responsibility of his children until the advent of Islām.

Lesson Four

ARAB RELIGION

Allāh sent to the Arab people many prophets who called them to worship Allāh alone, such as Hūd and Ṣāliḥ ﷺ.

One of those whom Allāh sent to them was Ismāʿīl, son of Ibrāhīm ﷺ, who was the forefather of the Arabised Arabs. His descendants followed his religion (*dīn*) after him. After much time had passed, however, there came to be amongst them principal misguiders, who converted them from monotheism (*tawḥīd*) to association of others with Allāh (*shirk*). They set up idols and images for them to take as associates of Allāh by serving them. These they erected around the Kaʿbah. For some of them they built their own temples, such as those of ʿUzzā, Suwāʿ, Yaghūth, Yaʿūq and Manāh. Hence, these idols became, in the sight of the general populace, partners of Allāh, or additional gods which they would exalt, seeking to gain their favour by offering sacrifices to them.

Some would divide their sacrifices between the idols and Allāh. These are the people of whom Allāh says:

﴿وَجَعَلُوا لِلَّهِ مِمَّا ذَرَأَ مِنَ الْحَرْثِ وَالْأَنْعَامِ نَصِيبًا، فَقَالُوا هَذَا لِلَّهِ بِزَعْمِهِمْ وَهَذَا لِشُرَكَائِنَا فَمَا كَانَ لِشُرَكَائِهِمْ فَلَا يَصِلُ إِلَى اللَّهِ، وَمَا كَانَ لِلَّهِ فَهُوَ يَصِلُ إِلَى شُرَكَائِهِمْ سَاءَ مَا يَحْكُمُونَ﴾

And the polytheists assign to Allāh from that which He created of crops and livestock a share and say, “This is for

Allāh,” by their claim, “and this is for our partners [associated with Him].” But what is for their partners does not reach Allāh, while what is for Allāh—this reaches their partners. Evil is that which they judge. (6:136)

Some historians hold the view that the reason for the Arabs’ worship of these idols was out of glorification of the dead in whose images the idols had been formed. Later generations did not grasp the significance of the images; however, since they had inherited the practice of glorifying them from their forefathers, they became to them gods to be worshiped. This is the wisdom behind Islām’s prohibition against erecting images of great people.

Amongst the Arabs were also those who worshipped the sun, prostrating to it at sunrise, after it had reached its zenith, and at sunset. This is the reason why the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ forbade prayers at these times¹².

There were also those who worshipped the moon and made images of it which they exalted. There was also a group who worshipped the planets.

Some Arabs adopted Judaism. Many of the Ḥimyarites and the people of Yathrib did so.

Others were Christian Arabs. These were the Ghassānids, inhabitants of the Syrian hills; and the people of Najrān. The Syrian Arabs had adopted Christianity from the Romans.

Thus, there existed various forms of religion amongst the Arabs. They were not united by religion or creed until the coming of Islām, which united them and reconciled them to each other.

Nevertheless, the majority of Arabs viewed the Ka‘bah with respect and would perform pilgrimage (*ḥajj*) to it in order to glorify it. The most famous pilgrimage was that which took place during the

months in which the Arabs prohibited fighting. Thus, if a man happened to meet the killer of his father or brother during the course of the pilgrimage, he would not obstruct him.

ARAB CHARACTER

The Arabs were famous for the following character traits, by which they were known and distinguished:

Generosity: They saw it as one of their principal duties that their guest was treated with hospitality. Such was the case that, if a guest arrived, a man would slaughter his camel for him which had been his last resort in time of need. A number of Arabs became famous for putting those in need before themselves, such as: Ḥātim Ṭay, Kaʿb ihn Māmāh, ʿAbdullāh ihn Judʿān and Hāshim ihn ʿAbd Manāf, amongst others.

Love of independence and rejection of injustice: An Arab man would have a strong sense of dignity and would not accept humiliation, no matter what its source. Thus, anyone who considers the great Arab wars will find that they were caused by this sense of dignity and refusal to accept injustice.

For example, the cause of the Battle of Dhū Qār was as follows: Nuʿmān ihn al-Mundhir, on being summoned to Madāʾin by Khosrow, was suspicious of foul-play and so he left his weapons and harem in the charge of Qays ibn Masʿūd. Having killed Nuʿmān, Khosrow demanded of Qays that he surrender the charge which Nuʿmān had entrusted to him. Qays refused and prepared for war. That was the cause of this great battle, in which the Arabs won their first victory against the Persians. In the same way, if a person sought protection with an Arab, he would sacrifice himself and his wealth for that person's sake.



Basūs, the maternal aunt of Jassās ibn Murrah, had pledged her protection to someone. This person owned a she-camel which used to graze with the camels belonging to Jassās. The chief of the tribe, Kulayb ibn Rabl‘ah, had a valley which he had allocated as a sanctuary, and in which only his animals could graze. One day, he saw the she-camel belonging to Basūs’ client grazing in the valley, so he shot an arrow at its udder. When she learnt what had happened, Basūs cried, “O, for shame!” Jassās calmed her down and then went out and killed Kulayb, intending to erase the disgrace and humiliation which had become attached to him as a result of his client’s camel being attacked. This was the cause of the War of Basūs, which broke out between the tribes of Kulayb and Jassās and which lasted for many years, resulting in the near total annihilation of both tribes.

Loyalty to friends in times of hardship and ease: This was another element of Arab character and is praised in their poetry, which describes all aspects of noble character.

A quick temper and recklessness: Alongside their praiseworthy character traits, the Arabs had shortcomings, of which these are two. This side of their character was induced by the harshness of their homeland and their need to subsist. Hence, they were involved in continuous raids and persistent wars against each other, with each tribe coveting the wealth of its adversary.

Burying daughters: That is, burying them alive. This is the most evil act reported to have been perpetrated by some tribes. Those who did so acted out of fear of poverty, regarding a daughter as incapable of providing for her own subsistence, in contrast to a son. Hence, such a person would attack his daughter as soon as she was born and then erase all trace of her by burying her. This is an abominable crime. Some people of reason amongst them called for this practice to be prohibited and would buy the girl from her father who intended to

bury her alive. In this way, many of these unfortunates were saved. Allāh Most High censures the practice of burying daughters alive in His Noble Book¹³.

12 It is narrated from ‘Uqbah ibn ‘Āmir : ‘There are three times which the Messenger of Allāh  forbade us from praying at, and from burying our dead: when the sun has dearly started to rise until it is fully risen; when the sun is directly overhead at midday until it has passed its zenith; and when the sun starts to set until it has fully set.’ [Muslim (1926)]

13 The Most High says:

﴿وَإِذَا بُشِّرَ أَحَدُهُم بِالْأُنْثَىٰ ظَلَّ وَجْهُهُ مُسْوَدًّا وَهُوَ كَظِيمٌ، يَتَوَارَىٰ مِنَ الْقَوْمِ مِنْ سُوءِ مَا بُشِّرَبِهِ، أَيَمْسِكُهُ عَلَىٰ هُونٍ أَمْ يَدُسُّهُ فِي التُّرَابِ أَلَا سَاءَ مَا يَحْكُمُونَ﴾

And when one of them is informed of [the birth of] a female, his face becomes dark, and he suppresses grief. He hides himself from the people because of the ill of which he has been informed. Should he keep it in humiliation or bury it in the ground? Unquestionably, evil is what they decide.

(16:58–59)

He also says:

﴿وَإِذَا الْمَوْءُودَةُ سُئِلَتْ بِأَيِّ ذَنْبٍ قُتِلَتْ﴾

And when the girl [who was] buried alive is asked for what sin she was killed (81:8–9)

Lesson Five

ARABIC LANGUAGE, LITERATURE AND LEARNING

The peoples of Qaḥṭān and ‘Adnān had their own respective languages. While these two languages were forms of the same dialect, they varied significantly in terms of vocabulary. Combined, they are referred to as the Arabic language, which is an extremely rich language. This is observable in that there often exist many words which refer to the same thing, in some cases hundreds.

This lexical wealth was further augmented as the Arabs adopted Persian and Roman words, having refined them by using them in a way which fit the pattern of Arabic words, sometimes leaving a word in its original state after only very slight adjustment. The dictionaries are full of such words¹⁴.

There have been numerous Arab rhetoricians who have excelled in their ability to convey meaning in a manner which is both stylistically excellent and profound. These were the orators and the poets.

They would recite poetry in a metre specifically chosen to best convey the meaning and for ease of memorisation. In it they recorded their exploits and boasted of their achievements. They held legendary market-gatherings, such as Sūq ‘Ukāz, in which people from all around would gather and the poets would recite their odes (*qaṣīdahs*); then judges would award precedence to the most eloquent of them.

The most renowned of these poets are the authors of the Seven Suspended Odes (*Mi‘allaqāt*)¹⁵, whose *qaṣīdahs* were highly regarded

and acclaimed by the Arabs. Amongst the finest is that of Zuhayr ibn Abī Sulmā, in which he says:

Whoever puts benevolence before honour
 Augments it; whoever guards not against abuse is abused.
Whoever fails to defend his water-tank with his weapons
 Will have it broken; whoever refrains from wronging people
 will himself be wronged.
Whoever wanders abroad mistakes his enemy for a friend;
 Whoever honours not himself will not be honoured.
Whoever possesses plenty but begrudges it
 his own people will be dispensed with and reviled;
And whatever a mans character
 —even if he deems it hidden from people—it will be known.

Poets were to the Arab tribes as newspaper proprietors in the modern era. They defended their respective tribes, either by praising their attributes or attacking their enemies. Each tribe had its own poet and orator.

One famous Arab orator was Suḥbān Wā'il, whose renown was such that the phrase 'more eloquent than Suḥbān' was coined. Others included Quss ibn Ṣā'idah al-Iyādī, Zuhayr ibn Khabāb al-Ḥimyarī and Qays ibn Zuhayr al-ʿAbasī.

Most Arabs were illiterate. They therefore relied on memory to preserve poems and speeches until writing became established amongst them, which they adopted from neighbouring societies. The last of the Arabs to adopt the practice of writing were the Arabs of the Ḥijāz. Thus, when the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ was sent, writing was extremely rare; but Islām helped it to spread amongst some individuals.

Consequently, the Arabs had no written learning. Rather, each generation inherited from its predecessors through imitation. They had genealogists, who determined the precise genealogy of the tribes, tracing their ancestries back to their respective founding forefathers. This they undertook with painstaking care.

They also had collectors of reports (*akhbārīyūn*), who knew accounts of past generations, and as such were similar to contemporary historians. These they took from memorised poetry, which acted as an archive for their morals and a vessel for their knowledge. Hence, it is said that ‘poetry is the treasury of the Arabs’¹⁶.

Of major concern to the Arabs were the celestial bodies and their movements, so that they could navigate by them in the darkness over sea and land, and so that they could have knowledge of the rains, which they depended on for survival. They also knew the lunar mansions and their winds. It was the Arabs who divided the celestial sphere into twelve, calling each one a constellation, so that every month of the year had its own particular constellation.

Another discipline which they practised was that of tracking. This included both tracking clues and ‘tracking’ people. The former involved following foot-prints and hoof-prints in order to determine the trail of the pursued. The latter involved comparing the appearance of two individuals in order to judge the authenticity of their genealogical relationship. They were strangely skilled at both these disciplines. The Bedouin of the Ḥijāz and Sudan have retained nothing of these skills, whereas many of them used to be able to look at a track and say: ‘This is so-and-so’s footprint and this is the hoof-print of so-and-so’s camel.’ Likewise, if they looked at a number of people, they would be able to match a father with his son and a man

with his brother, and to distinguish which of the group was not related to them.

Another of their disciplines was physiognomy; that is, analysing a person's form, appearance, colour and speech in order to draw conclusions about his character, virtues and vices.

They also practised medicine, based mainly on limited experimentation, knowledge of which they would inherit from local shaykhs and elders—similar to what we refer to as 'traditional medicine'. One of their most renowned doctors was Ḥārith ibn Kaladah. Cauterisation was one of their most important treatments and is still practised by the Arabs.

This was the extent of Arab science. None of it was ordered or systemised; rather, it was limited to their needs in the desert. This was the case until the advent of Islām, which guided them to sound practice, and as a result of which they developed a great civilisation.

14 These are known as 'arabised' words. They include those which were arabised before the coming of Islām, thus becoming part of the Arabic language; some of these are mentioned in the Noble Qur'ān. Others were arabised after the coming of Islām and spread during the 'Abbāsīd era. The most famous work on arabised vocabulary is by Jawālīqī; and that on arabised vocabulary in the Qur'ān is *Al-Muhadhdhab fīmā waqa'a fi'l-Qur'ān min ai-Mu'arrab*, by Suyūṭī.

15 They are: Imru' al-Qays, Ṭarafah ibn al-ʿAbd, Zuhayr ibn Abī Sulmā, Labīd ibn Rabīʿah, ʿAmr ibn Kulthūm, ʿAntarah ibn Shaddād and Ḥārith ibn Ḥilzah.

16 This aphorism is attributed to Sayyidunā ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb



Lesson Six

ARAB SOCIAL STATUS BEFORE ISLĀM

The Man within his Family

The man was head of the Arab family and in charge of all its affairs. A woman held no standing but was regarded in the same way that a man regards a discarded object. The Arabs held that a woman's sole function was to be a repository for children. She played no part in raising her child, having borne and nursed him. Only a small number of women from noble households had any power within their homes. As for the majority of women, they were regarded with disdain and contempt, to the extent that many tribes practised female infanticide by burying their daughters alive:

﴿وَإِذَا بُشِّرَ أَحَدُهُم بِالْأُنْثَىٰ ظَلَّ وَجْهُهُ مُسْوَدًّا وَهُوَ كَظِيمٌ، يَتَوَارَىٰ مِنَ الْقَوْمِ مِنْ سُوءِ مَا بُشِّرَبِهِ، أَيَمْسِكُهَا عَلَىٰ هُونٍ أَمْ يَدُسُّهُ فِي التُّرَابِ أَلَّا سَاءَ مَا يَحْكُمُونَ﴾

And when one of them is informed of [the birth of] a female, his face becomes dark, and he suppresses grief. He hides himself from the people because of the ill of which he has been informed. Should he keep it in humiliation or bury it in the ground? Unquestionably, evil is what they decide.

(16:58–59)

Arabs raised their male offspring to be stern, adventurous and fearless, in order to ensure that they would support them by defending them or attacking their enemies. Hence, they would give

them disturbing names, such as: Murrah (bitt-temess), Asad (lion), Nimr (tiger/leopard), Kalb (dog) and such like.

There was no limit upon a man in terms of marriage. He could marry as many times as he desired.

The Man within his Tribe

Tribal solidarity within each tribe was reinforced by hostility towards any of its members from other tribes. If a tribesman was harmed by a member of another tribe and appealed to his people, they would hasten to respond. Consequently, fighting would break out between the two tribes for the most trivial reasons. This was because there were no arbiters to judge between the different tribes whose opinions would be respected.

The causes of such disputes are many and, as a result, so are the disputes.

Whenever an individual was killed, his whole tribe would seek to exact retribution from the killer's tribe. If the victim had been a leader, his tribe would not be satisfied with retaliating against his killer—if he were of lower standing—but would desire retaliation against a leader of comparable status to the victim—even if this rival leader had played no part in the crime.

Intertribal strife raged continuously because there was nothing to restrain it, and it was this which made the Arabs weak, despite their courage and fearlessness.

The two neighbouring empire-states, Persia and Byzantium, controlled the most fertile Arab lands. Persia held sway over Yemen, Yamāmah, Bahrain and the Euphrates Valley, in some cases appointing over them their agents, whether Persians or Arabs. Byzantium controlled the Arab lands bordering Syria, all of which were under their yoke, apart from Najd and the Ḥijāz. The tribes of

these two areas were involved in unabated wars, even those of them who shared recent common ancestors, such as the Aws and the Khazraj, and Quraysh and Qays.

At the same time, the Arab lands were in great need of religious reform which would rectify their corrupt beliefs, and social reform which would teach them a man's duties to his family and to his tribe. There was a need for individual tribes to unite under one banner and pool their strength in order to gain victory against the neighbouring empire-states.


Hence, Allāh looked with compassion upon this community and sent them His most noble Messenger, Muḥammad ﷺ.

Lesson Seven

SAYYIDUNĀ MUḤAMMAD

He is Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib ibn Hāshim ibn ‘Abd Manāf, from one of the greatest families of Quraysh.

His father, ‘Abdullāh, married his mother, Āminah bint Wahab, who was from the Banū Zuhrah clan of Quraysh. His father died before he was born¹⁷.

He  was born in Makkah on 20 April (Nisyān) in the year 571 (the Year of the Elephant).


His grandfather, ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib, took responsibility for him; then his paternal uncle, after the death of his grandfather¹⁸.

In his childhood and youth, he was an exemplar of noble character, such that Quraysh called him: Al-Amīn (the Trustworthy), due to his truthfulness and trustworthiness.

At the age of twenty-five, he married Khadījah bint Khuwaylid, from the clan of Banū Asad ibn ‘Abd al-‘Uzzā, of Quraysh.

Prior to his mission, Allāh preserved him from all manner of actions practised in the Time of Ignorance (*Jāhiliyyah*) which the Noble Revelation came to oppose. He detested idols immensely and would never attend any of the festivals or celebrations which those who worshiped them held for them. He also forbade himself from drinking alcohol, despite its widespread consumption by the Arabs.

THE NOBLE MISSION

Upon reaching the age of forty, Allah sent him  to mankind as a bringer of glad tidings and a warner, to bring people out of the

darkness of ignorance and into the light of knowledge. This took place at the beginning of February (Shabāt) in the year 610.

The angel responsible for delivering Allāh's Message to the prophets came to him in the Cave of Hirā', making him recite the first verses to be revealed of the Qur'ān, the Words of the Most High:

﴿اقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ - خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ - اقْرَأْ وَرَبُّكَ
الْأَكْرَمُ - الَّذِي عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ - عَلَّمَ الْإِنْسَانَ مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ﴾


Recite in the name of your Lord who created, created man
from a clinging substance. Recite! And your Lord is the most
Generous, Who taught by the pen, taught man that which he
knew not. (96:1-5)


This indicates that the foundation of this True Religion is knowledge and learning.


Next, the responsibility for calling people to Allāh Most High was revealed to him, in His Words, may His mention be Exalted:

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الْمُدَّثِّرُ - قُمْ فَأَنْذِرْ - وَرَبَّكَ فَكَبِّرْ - وَثِيَابَكَ فَطَهِّرْ -
وَالرُّجْزَ فَاهْجُرْ - وَلَا تَمْنُنْ تَسْتَكْثِرُ - وَلِرَبِّكَ فَاصْبِرْ﴾

O you who covers himself [with a garment], arise and warn!
And glorify your Lord! And purify your clothing! And avoid
all defilement! And do not confer favour to acquire more,
but be patient for your Lord. (74:1-7)


He  obeyed Allāh's Command, calling to the worship of Allāh a people who were harsh and crude, and who followed their forefathers in worshipping idols.



A small group who were sound of mind believed him , including Abū Bakr aṣ-Ṣiddīq, Khadījah bint Khuwaylid, 'Alī ibn Abi Ṭālib, Zayd ibn Ḥārithah, and others of the first Muslims.

At first, he  called to Allāh secretly, until the Words of the Most High were revealed to him:

﴿فَاصْدَعْ بِمَا تُؤْمَرُ وَأَعْرِضْ عَنِ الْمُشْرِكِينَ﴾

Then declare what you are commanded and turn away from the polytheists. (15:94)

Then he obeyed the Command of his Lord and openly called the people to the Religion (*Dīn*) of Allāh. This caused the chiefs of Quraysh to oppose him, out of loyalty to the ways of their forefathers and fear of losing their positions of leadership. They were not content merely not to follow the Message, but rather took to oppressing all those who did so in any way they could. They inflicted suffering upon the Messenger of Allāh , but he and his followers met this with patience, bearing severe afflictions for the sake of Allāh.

When he  saw the extent of his Companions' suffering, he commanded them to perform migration (*hijrah*) to the lands of the Abyssinians. At first, ten men and five women made this migration; then eighty-three men and eighteen women followed them. They were treated with hospitality by the Negus, King of Abyssinia, who believed in the Messenger of Allāh .

As for those Companions who remained in Makkah, they were afflicted by unbearable torture—unbearable except to those in whose

hearts Islām was firmly established so that it had become part of their flesh and blood. Such were the Companions (*Ṣaḥābah*), may Allāh be Pleased with them.

Some of this suffering was diverted from the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ by his uncle, Abū Ṭālib, and his wife, Khadijah. However, when they both died¹⁹, matters became even worse, with the polytheists (*mushrikūn*) obstructing people from following the way of Allāh and preventing all those who wished to accept Islām from doing so. The Messenger of Allāh therefore left Makkah for Ṭā'if, which was inhabited by the tribes of Thaḳīf. He proposed to their leaders that they help him until the affair of his Lord had been accomplished and he had delivered His Message. However, they responded arrogantly and even ordered the insolent amongst them to inflict harm upon him on his return journey. Thus, they began pelting him with stones so that his heels bled. While Zayd ibn Ḥārithah attempted to ward them off, he ﷺ supplicated to Allāh, saying: “O Allāh, I complain to You of my weakness and my lowliness before men. O Most Merciful! You are the Lord of the oppressed and You are my Lord. To whom will You relinquish me? If You are not Angry with me, then I care not what happens to me!”

On his return to Makkah, the oppression and ignorance of the polytheists had grown worse still.

¹⁷ As for his mother, she died when he ﷺ was six years old.

¹⁸ His grandfather, ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib, died when he ﷺ was eight years old.

¹⁹ This occurred in the tenth year of the Mission (620), which the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ called ‘the Year of Sorrow’ (*‘Ām al-Ḥuzn*).

Lesson Eight

MIGRATION (*HIJRAH*) TO MADĪNAH

When he ﷺ saw that Quraysh were preventing him from delivering the Message of his Lord, he proposed to the Arab tribes who used to attend the annual pilgrimage at Makkah that they protect him so that the Message could be delivered. Amongst the pilgrims were the Arabs of Yathrib, the Aws and the Khazraj. He ﷺ turned his attention to a party of six of them, all of whom were from the Khazraj. He invited them to Islam and to support him in conveying the Message of his Lord. They believed in him and affirmed him, telling him: “We have left behind us our people, who are currently in a state of enmity towards one another. If Allāh unites them under your authority, there will be no mightier man than you.” They promised to meet him at the following year’s pilgrimage.

The following year, twelve men of the people of Madīnah came to him and met with him at ‘Aqabah. They accepted Islām and pledged allegiance to him. He dispatched with them someone to teach them the Qur’ān and increase their understanding of the Religion. Once Sa’d ibn Mu‘ādh and Usayd ibn Hudayr, two of their leaders, had become Muslims, the people of Madīnah entered Islām in throngs.

At the time of pilgrimage, the year after that First Pledge, many of the people of Madīnah came to Makkah, intending to perform the pilgrimage. They sent a delegation to the Messenger of Allāh, promising to meet with him at night time at Aqabah. When the arranged time came, he ﷺ went to them. Seventy-three men and two women had assembled. There, they pledged allegiance to him: that they would worship Allāh Alone, without partner; and that they would protect him as they protected their own women and children when he came to them.

When this pledge of allegiance had been concluded, the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ commanded his Companions to emigrate to Madīnah, and they obeyed his command. On realising what had happened, the leaders of Quraysh gathered in the assembly hall (*dār an-nadwah*) and consulted about what they should do with the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ. Finally, they agreed to kill him while he was out of his house. They intended to accomplish this by choosing a strong young man from each tribe; they would all strike him as one, so that his blood would be dispersed amongst the sub-tribes of Quraysh.

However, Allāh alerted His Messenger to his enemies' scheme and commanded him to emigrate to Madīnah. He set out straight away for the house of Abū Bakr aṣ-Ṣiddīq and informed him that Allāh had permitted him to perform the migration. So Abū Bakr prepared two mounts for the journey and chose a guide to show them the way. He arranged to meet him ﷺ at night outside Makkah. This happened to be the night upon which the polytheists had agreed to carry out their plot.

When the time came, the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ commanded his cousin, 'Alī, to spend the night in his stead. Then he left the house,

by the Grace of Allāh, without anyone seeing him. He and Abū Bakr travelled until they reached the Cave of Thawr, where they hid. When morning came and the polytheists realised that the Messenger ﷺ had escaped them, they sent after him in every direction. Although they offered rewards to anyone who could bring him back, they failed to achieve their aim.

Three days later, the Messenger ﷺ and aṣ-Ṣiddiq emerged from the cave and continued on their way until they reached Madīnah. Its people were overjoyed by his ﷺ arrival. He stopped at Qubā' on 8th Rabī' al-Awwal (20th September) in the year 622.

ACHIEVEMENTS IN MAKKAH

What the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ preached in Makkah can be summarised as two matters:

First: Belief in the Oneness of Allāh.


Secondly: Belief in the Resurrection; and that there is a second day, the Day of Judgement (*Yawm ad-Dīn*), on which a person will be recompensed for his actions: good with good and evil with evil.

Allāh also elucidated on the tongue of His Messenger the qualities of a noble character, without which a person's faith (*īmān*) is incomplete: "truthfulness, courage, modesty, compassion, abstinence, forbearance and others".

These matters are the themes of the majority of the Qur'ānic verses (*āyāt*) which Allāh caused to be revealed in Makkah, and which form most of the Qur'ān.

The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ resided at Qubā' for a number of nights. During this time, he established Qubā' Mosque, which Allāh

describes in Sūrat at-Taw-bah as a *masjid* established upon fear of Allāh (*taqwā*) from the first day.

Then he  moved on to Madīnah, with the Helpers (*Anṣār*) surrounding him wearing their swords. The women and children came out, saying:

O the white moon has risen over us



From the Valley of Wadāʿ

And we owe it to show gratefulness

All the while we call upon Allāh.

O you Messenger, sent amongst us,

With Command that must be observed. . .

On arrival in Madīnah, the Messenger of Allāh  stayed with Abū Ayyūb al-Anṣārī, whose name was Khālīd ibn Zayd. The Emigrants (*Muhājirūn*) also stayed with their brethren from amongst the Helpers, who provided them with honourable dwellings, preferring them over themselves. Then the Messenger of Allāh  sent “Zayd ibn Ḥārithah and Abū Rāfiʿ” to Makkah to bring those of his family who had remained behind. This they did. However, the polytheists of Makkah prevented some of the weak from emigrating.

Lesson Nine

CONSTRUCTION OF THE MOSQUE

In the first year of Emigration (*Hijrah*) (622) the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ constructed his Mosque (*Masjid*) in Madīnah. In that same year, Allāh legislated for the *adhān* to call the Muslims to prayer (*ṣalah*).

In addition, Allāh tested the believers in Madīnah through the hypocrites (*munāfiqūn*), as he tested them in Makkah through the polytheists. The hypocrites were people who outwardly professed Islām but who inwardly harboured unbelief (*kufr*). Allāh also tested them through the Jews of Banū Qurayzah and Banū Qaynuqā'. However, it was the manner of the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ to accept people at face value and to leave what they concealed to Allāh. This is how he treated the hypocrites. As for the Jews, he contracted a treaty with them requiring them to abandon war and harmful actions towards the Muslims, and prohibiting them from supporting anyone against him ﷺ. If the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ were to be attacked in Madīnah, the Jews would be required to support him.

THE LEGITIMACY OF FIGHTING

The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ did not fight anyone in order to convert them to the religion of Islām. Rather, his mission was restricted to proclaiming the good news, warning and convincing by means of evidence. This was the case until the people of Makkah expelled the Muslims from their homes and obstructed them from the way of Allāh. Then Allāh permitted His Messenger ﷺ to fight them. It was initially Quraysh alone whom he ﷺ was confronted with, but when

other Arab polytheists joined forces against the Muslims, Allāh commanded them to fight them all, in His Words:

﴿وَقَاتِلُوا الْمُشْرِكِينَ كَافَّةً كَمَا يُقَاتِلُونَكُمْ كَافَّةً﴾

And fight against the polytheists collectively as they fight against you collectively. (9:36)


FIGHTING COMMENCES

Quraysh were in the habit of sending their trade to Syria for buying and selling. The mounts transporting this trade were referred to as ‘caravans’. To ensure their protection, these would be accompanied by many noblemen of Quraysh and their raiding parties. In order to reach Syria, they had to pass through Madīnah. The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ decided to seize their trade on its outbound and return journeys in order to weaken them²⁰. Hence, he would dispatch raiding parties to impede these trade journeys.



At the beginning of the second year after the *Hijrah* (624) he ﷺ went out in person to oppose one of Qurayshs caravans which was returning from Syria, and which was guarded by a troop whose leader was Abū Sufyān ibn Ḥarb al-Umawī. When Abū Sufyān learnt of this, he sent to Quraysh appealing for their assistance in protecting their caravan. They speedily hastened to do so, dispatching nine hundred and fifty men.



The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ had not received news of Quraysh’s advance, until he arrived at Rawhā²¹, where the news reached him. He consulted his Companions and said to them, “Allāh has promised me one of the two parties: the caravan or the troop.” Then it became clear to him that some of them wanted it to be the unarmed one—

that is, the caravan. However, their chiefs and leaders told him to proceed according to what Allāh had commanded, regardless of the difficulties and hardships it might entail.

It then reached him  that Abū Sufyān had escaped with the caravan, having taken the coastal route. However, this had not deterred Quraysh, who determined upon advancing to Badr and descended by its steeper slope. The Muslims also advanced and descended by its lesser slope.

Once the two armies had presented themselves, the fighting began by duelling, according to the custom of the Arabs. Attack followed and the Muslims gained outright victory, killing around seventy of their enemies. This was despite the fact that the number of Muslims was less than a third of that of the polytheists.

When the Messenger  and his Companions returned with the prisoners, he  decided to accept ransom (*fidyah*) for them, which was paid by their relatives. As for those who were poor and could not afford the ransom but could read and write, they were given ten young Muslims to teach. This was their ransom.

On his return to Madīnah, he  became aware of a treachery committed by the Jews of Banū Qaynuqā²², so he summoned their leaders and warned them of the punishment for injustice. They replied in an evil manner²³, showed their enmity and entrenched themselves in their fortresses. The Messenger of Allāh  went and surrounded them. When they came to the realisation that resistance would be impossible, they appealed to the Muslims to refrain from attack and allow them to leave Madīnah. Their plea was granted and the Muslims were relieved of their evil.


Also that year, the direction of prayer (*qiblah*) was changed to facing the Ka‘bah, prayer (*ṣalāh*) having previously been performed

facing the direction of Jerusalem (Bayt al-Maqdis). In addition, the fast (*ṣawm*) of Ramaḍān was made obligatory.


In the third year after the *Hijrah* (625) the Battle of Uḥud took place. What caused it was Quraysh's realisation that the doors of trade had been closed in their faces. They therefore agreed to prepare an army for war against the Muslims in Madīnah and mustered three thousand men. When the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ learnt of their advance towards Madīnah, he went out to meet them in the month of Shawwāl, descending the Valley of Uḥud to the east of Madīnah, so that his back was to the mountain. The Polytheists descended into the valley from the direction of Mt. Uḥud. They arranged their ranks and the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ arranged the ranks of his Companions. He ﷺ placed fifty archers on the side of the mountain to form a rear guard for the Muslims and commanded them not to leave their positions under any circumstances.

The fighting began with duels and then the charge. At first, victory was with the Muslims and the polytheists began to be routed. On seeing this, the archers on the side of the mountain left their positions, against the command of the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ. When Khālīd ibn al-Walīd—who was at that time one of the amīrs of the polytheists—saw what was happening, he climbed the mountain with a division of soldiers and came upon the Muslims from behind, taking them completely unawares. Taken aback, the Muslims broke ranks and began to strike one another in their confusion, while those of the polytheists who had retreated returned to their ranks.

As a result, many of the Muslims retreated to the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ, where a group of his chief Companions were defending him with their lives. He ﷺ had been greatly afflicted and those


surrounding him had received many wounds. Some seventy Muslims were killed, including Ḥamzah ibn ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib .

The cause of what had befallen the Muslims was twofold:

First: Disobeying the command of the Messenger of Allāh .

Second: Diverting their attention to the booty before victory had been achieved.

Thereafter, Abū Sufyān cried in his loudest voice: “Great deeds! Truly, war is a contest with alternate success! The next meeting will be Badr, next year.” Then the polytheists returned to Makkah, without diverting to Madīnah.

On his return to Madīnah, the Messenger of Allāh  became wary that the polytheists would return to attack Madīnah. He summoned his Companions to go forth and they responded to the summons of Allāh and His Messenger having been afflicted by injury²⁴. Their going forth was a means of frightening the polytheists and preventing them from completing their victory, as they had determined, by attacking Madīnah.

²⁰ It was also as replacement for the property of the Emigrants, which they had seized and taken.

²¹ A stopping place on the way between Madīnah and Badr, situated seventy-four kilometres from Madīnah.

²² They had attempted to violate the honour of one of the women of the Helpers (*Anṣār*).

²³ One of the things that they said was: ‘Do not be dazzled by what you were confronted with from your own people, for they know nothing of war. If you confront us, you will know that we are the people [to be reckoned with].’

24 This expedition was known as Ḥamrā' al-Asad, about which Allāh Most High says:

﴿الَّذِينَ اسْتَجَابُوا لِلَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا أَصَابَهُمُ الْقَرْحُ لِلَّذِينَ أَحْسَنُوا مِنْهُمْ وَاتَّقُوا أَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ﴾

Those [believers] who responded to Allāh and the Messenger after injury had struck them. For those of them who did good and feared Allāh [there] is a great reward. (3:172)

Lesson Ten

In the fourth year after the *Hijrah* (625) the Conquest of Banū Naḍīr took place, the cause of which was [their contravention of] the treaties which had been contracted between them and the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ. While the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ was on his way to see them in order to ask them to fulfil the conditions stipulated in these treaties, a group of them plotted to kill him. Allāh made him aware of their intention, so he returned to Madīnah and prepared to fight them. When he had besieged them and they realised that they could not hold out, they requested that he spare their blood and allow them to leave Madīnah. The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ did so and they left. Some of them took up residence in Khaybar and others in Adhriʿāt²⁵ in Syria.

With the beginning of the month of Shaʿbān came the appointed rendezvous with Abū Sufyān at Badr. The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ advanced in compliance with the agreement. However, Abū Sufyān reneged on the agreement and only the Muslims kept their date at Badr that year.

In the fifth year after the *Hijrah* (627) the Battle of the Trench (*Khandaq*) took place. This was precipitated by Quraysh mustering its forces and allies, with the intention of attacking Madīnah a second time. They numbered ten thousand. When the Muslims learnt of this, Salmān al-Fārisī ﷺ suggested that they dig a trench (*khandaq*) around Madīnah to prevent the polytheists from attacking it. The Muslims dug. When the army of confederates (*aḥzāb*) arrived, they were unable to do anything except shoot arrows. At the same

time, news reached Allāh's Messenger ﷺ that Banū Qurayẓah had violated their treaty with the Muslims during that critical time, and that the hypocrites had revealed the hatred and bitterness which they concealed, such that the Muslims' situation became more difficult.

However, Allāh completed His blessing upon them by engendering a difference between the leaders of the polytheists and the leaders of the Jews. This was at the same time that Allāh sent a bitter wind on a dark night, causing the polytheists to grow fearful and settle upon departure and abandoning their attack upon Madīnah. Thus, they departed. Allāh reminds the Muslims of this blessing in *Sūrat al-Aḥzāb*.

Once the enemy had completely departed, the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ and his Companions turned to Banū Qurayẓah, who had reneged on their agreement and betrayed the Muslims in a time of war. They surrounded them and, when they had surrendered, Sa'd ibn Mu'ādh decreed that the men amongst them should be killed. They were killed as punishment for their treachery and hence Madīnah was free from [Banū Qurayẓah] and the Muslims safe from their plotting.

In the sixth year after the *Hijrah* (628) the Lesser Pilgrimage (*ʿUmrah*) of Ḥudaybiyyah²⁶ took place. The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ had a dream in which he saw himself and his Companions entering the Sacred Mosque (Al-Masjid al-Ḥarām) in safety, with shaven heads or shortened hair. He informed the Muslims of this and that he intended to perform *ʿumrah*. He left accompanied by one thousand five hundred men and the sacrificial animals which would demonstrate that they came in order to perform the pilgrimage and not to fight. Upon reaching ʿUṣfān²⁷ he realised that Quraysh would not permit him to peacefully enter Makkah. Hence, negotiations

were undertaken by the two sides and the following was finally agreed:

1. That the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ would return [to Madīnah] that year and come back the following year to perform *‘umrah*.
2. That the war between the two parties would be put aside for four years.
3. That any members of Quraysh who reached the Muslims [i.e. having converted to Islām] would be returned to Quraysh, but that the polytheists would not return any Muslims [i.e. having apostatised] who reached them.

A treaty was written between the two parties confirming these points. This was entered on the side of Allāh’s Messenger ﷺ by the tribe of Khuzā‘ah and on the side of Quraysh by the tribe of Bakr²⁸.

Then the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ returned to Makkah, the two sides having pledged security to one another. During this period of truce, he ﷺ corresponded with world leaders of the time, inviting them to Islām. Some of them responded positively, such as the Muqawqis, ruler of Egypt, and the Negus, ruler of Abyssinia. Others responded negatively, such as Khosrow, the ruler of Persia.

In the seventh year after the *Hijrah* (629) the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ attacked the fortresses of Khaybar in the north-east of Madīnah, whose Jewish residents had been the greatest provokers of the confederates in the Battle of the Trench against the Muslims. He ﷺ conquered their fortresses and made them the property of Islam. However, he left them in the hands of those who lived there, at the cost of half of what they produced.

When a year had passed since the Lesser Pilgrimage of Ḥudaybiyyah, the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ set out with the believers,

according to the conditions of the treaty with Quraysh; they performed *‘umrah* and returned.

4. In the month of Jumādā’l-Ākhirah, Allāh’s Messenger ﷺ dispatched an army under the command of Zayd ibn Ḥārithah²⁹ to Mu’tah. On arriving, they found that the Byzantines had mustered a great force of Arab Christians. Battle was waged between the two sides until Zayd was killed. When the Muslims realised how few in number they were in comparison to the Byzantines, they fought retreating until they escaped

²⁵ Now known as Dar‘ā.

²⁶ It was thus called because the Prophet ﷺ was prevented from entering Makkah al-Mukarramah and compelled to camp at Ḥudaybiyyah. He ﷺ slaughtered the sacrificial animals, shaved his head and ended his state of ritual consecration for the pilgrimage at this spot.

²⁷ ‘Uṣfān: a town situated about eighty kilometres north of Makkah on the road to Madīnah.

²⁸ On this occasion Allāh Most High revealed *Sūrat al-Faṭḥ*. This truce was described as a ‘manifest victory’ because it was the reason for the Conquest of Makkah which was to come.

²⁹ The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said that if Zayd ﷺ were killed, then the amīr should be Ja‘far ibn Abī Ṭālib ﷺ; and if he were killed, then ‘Abdullah ibn Rawāḥah ﷺ. When all three were killed, the Muslims agreed to appoint Khālīd ibn al-Walīd as amīr, who managed to extricate the Muslims from between the talons of the Byzantines. This happened because the Muslims numbered only three thousand, while the Byzantine army was a vast multitude.

Lesson Eleven

In the eighth year after the *Hijrah* (630) was the Conquest (*Fath*) of Makkah. The circumstances were that Quraysh violated the Treaty of Ḥudaybiyyah by supporting their allies, Banū Bakr, against Khuzā'ah, the allies of the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ. He ﷺ therefore set out with an army of ten thousand Muslim fighters. When they had neared Makkah, he arranged the troops and ordered one of his amirs³⁰ to enter Makkah from its highest point. He himself ﷺ entered from its lowest point, on the morning of Friday 20th Ramaḍān, meeting no notable resistance. On arriving at the House of Allāh, he circumambulated seven times, greeted the Black Stone with his staff and demolished the idols which had stood around the Ka'bah, saying:

﴿جَاءَ الْحَقُّ وَزَهَقَ الْبَاطِلُ إِنَّ الْبَاطِلَ كَانَ زَهُوقًا﴾

Truth has come, and falsehood has departed. Indeed,
falsehood is ever bound to depart. (17:81)

Then he called for the false gods, which were brought out of the House of Allāh. Thus, the Sacred Mosque was purified of these false objects of worship. Then he ﷺ summoned Quraysh, who had hurt him and fought against him, and said to them: “What do you suppose I should do with you?” They said, “Do well! You are a noble brother, son of a noble brother!” He said, “Go, you are free.”³¹ He pardoned them all, having gained power over them. These are the morals of the prophets, and of those who follow them in righteousness.

With the Conquest complete, the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ learnt that some tribes of Hawāzin had gathered to fight him. He therefore advanced with his troops and met them at Hunayn. A great battle ensued in which the Muslims initially retreated. Then they returned to Allāh's Messenger, who remained standing in the midst of the fighting, until Allāh aided them and routed their enemies.

He ﷺ then proceeded to Ṭā'if, which he besieged for a period. However, he discontinued the siege, as he had not been granted permission to conquer Ṭā'if. Hence, he returned to Madīnah and the conquest of Ṭā'if was later achieved through settlement.

When the Arabs saw that Quraysh had entered Islām, they too entered Islām in droves. This is referred to in *Sūrat an-Naṣr*.

﴿إِذَا جَاءَ نَصْرُ اللَّهِ وَالْفَتْحُ - وَرَأَيْتَ النَّاسَ يَدْخُلُونَ فِي دِينِ اللَّهِ أَفْوَاجًا - فَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ وَاسْتَغْفِرْهُ إِنَّهُ كَانَ تَوَّابًا﴾

When the victory of Allāh has come and the conquest, and you see the people entering into the Religion (Dīn) of Allāh in multitudes, then exalt the praises of your Lord and seek His Forgiveness. Indeed, He is ever Accepting of repentance.

(110:1-3)

In the ninth year after the *Hijrah* (630) the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ set out with the Muslim force for Tabūk, as news had reached him that the Byzantines were mustering a force there to attack him. On arriving there, however, they found nothing, so they returned to Madīnah.


In the tenth year after the *Hijrah* (632) the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ performed the Farewell Pilgrimage (*Hujjat al-Wadā'*), which was his





only Ḥajj. He set out on a Saturday with five days remaining of the month of Dhū'l-Qa'dah, with a total of ninety thousand pilgrims. During this pilgrimage he gave his famous Farewell Sermon (*Khuṭbat al-Wadāʿ*), in which he instructed the Muslims:



“O people, your blood and your property are inviolable until you meet your Lord, in the same way that this day of yours, in this month of yours, in this town of yours, is inviolable. Have I conveyed the message? Bear witness by Allāh! So let whoever has been entrusted with something deliver it to the person who entrusted it to him.



O people, the believers are but brothers. It is not lawful for any person to take the property of his brother without his full consent. Have I conveyed the message? Bear witness by Allāh! Do not then, after I am gone, go back to being unbelievers and striking at one another's necks; for I have left with you that which, if you follow it, [will ensure that] you will never go astray again: the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of His Prophet. Have I conveyed the message? Bear witness by Allāh!


O people, your Lord is One and your father is one. All of you are from Ādam and Adam is from dust. The noblest of you in the sight of Allāh is the one who fears Allāh the most. An Arab has no merit over a non-Arab other than through fear of Allāh. Have I conveyed the message? Bear witness by Allāh! Let those of you who are present convey the message to those who are absent.”

Then he  returned to Madīnah.

At the end of the month of Safar the Messenger of Allāh  prepared an army under the command of Usāmah ibn Zayd , to go to Ubna³², where Zayd ibn Ḥārithah  had been killed. They were to attack those who had been the cause of Zayd's death; however, the army did not go forth during the lifetime of Allāh's Messenger .

It was also during the last days of Safar that he  became ill and commanded Abū Bakr : to lead the people in prayer in his stead.

On Monday 13th Rabī^c al-Awwal (8th June 632) the Messenger of Allāh  was united with his Lord, having conveyed the Message with which he had been charged. His age was sixty-three lunar years and three days, or sixty-one solar years and eighty-four days. He  was buried on Wednesday morning, after the Muslims had appointed a successor (*khalifah*) to rule them.

30 Khālīd ibn al-Walīd .

31 Ibn Sa‘d and Nasā’i.

32 Ubnā: a place in Syria in the vicinity of Balqā’.

Lesson Twelve

THE CHARACTER OF ALLĀH'S MESSENGER ﷺ

Allāh praised His Prophet ﷺ in His Words, may His mention be Exalted:

﴿وَإِنَّكَ لَعَلَىٰ خُلُقٍ عَظِيمٍ﴾

And indeed, you are of a great moral character. (68:4)

Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah, Mother of the Believers رضي الله عنها, used to say: “His character was the Qur’ān.”³³ Allāh also described him ﷺ in His Words:

﴿لَقَدْ جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولٌ مِّنْ أَنفُسِكُمْ عَزِيزٌ عَلَيْهِ مَا عَنِتُّمْ
حَرِيصٌ عَلَيْكُم بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ رَءُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ﴾

There has come to you a Messenger from amongst yourselves. Grievous to him is what you suffer; [he is] concerned for you and to the believers is kind and merciful.
(9:128)

Despite the abundant wealth which Allāh had granted him after the conquests, the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ gave himself preference over none of it. He would not keep a dirham of it; rather, he would use it to pay expenses and give it to others. This was the case until he died, when his armour was sold³⁴.

He was compassionate, practising forbearance and pardoning whenever possible, acting upon the Words of Allāh Most High:

﴿خُذِ الْعَفْوَ وَأْمُرْ بِالْعُرْفِ وَأَعْرِضْ عَنِ الْجَاهِلِينَ﴾

Make allowance for human nature, enjoin what is good, and turn away from the ignorant. (7:199)

And His Words:

﴿وَاصْبِرْ عَلَىٰ مَا أَصَابَكَ إِنَّ ذَٰلِكَ مِنْ عَزْمِ الْأُمُورِ﴾


. . .and be patient in what befalls you. Truly, that is a matter [requiring] determination. (31:17)




When the polytheists committed actions which harmed him ﷺ he was asked to supplicate against them, but he said: “O Allāh, forgive my people; for they do not know.”³⁵

His ﷺ treatment of the polytheists of Makkah after the Conquest is evidence enough of his compassionate and forgiving nature.

As for courage and bravery, his reputation for them is undeniable: He participated in difficult situations. On more than one occasion, the heroic and the bold fled from him, while he ﷺ stood firm and unmoving; advancing, neither retreating nor wavering. There is no form of bravery which has not been attributed to him in abundance, and he was preserved from fleeing in the manner of others. His deeds at Uḥud and Ḥunayn are sufficient proof of this.

‘Ali ibn Abi Ṭālib رضي الله عنه said: “When the fighting became fierce and eyes turned red, we would seek to protect the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ. There would be no one closer to the enemy than him.”³⁶

As for bashfulness and forbearance, he  was the most bashful of people and the most forbearing towards mistakes. He had a kindly expression and delicate appearance. He would not speak of anything unpleasant to anyone, out of bashfulness and generosity of spirit. If he heard something unpleasant about someone, he would say: ‘What’s the matter with people, that they do such-and-such or say such-and-such?’³⁷

His good relations with his family, his good manners and his generosity of character towards all of creation are transmitted in well-known rigorously authenticated (*ṣaḥīḥ*) reports, including this narration of ‘Alī  who said: “He  was the most magnanimous of people, the most true-spoken and gentlehearted. He would befriend people and not frighten them away; and would honour the honourable amongst any people and appoint them as leaders. He missed his companions if they were absent, and would pay due attention to anyone who sat with him, to the extent that all who sat with him felt they were the most honoured by him. Whenever someone sat with him or approached him about some need, he  would wait patiently until the person left; and whenever someone requested something from him, he would not send him away without granting his request or speaking kindly to him. His magnanimity and good character encompassed everyone, so that he became like a father to them and they were equal in his eyes. He was always smiling, mild-tempered and flexible. He was not crude, rough, loud, obscene or critical.”

Allāh Most High says:

﴿فَبِمَا رَحْمَةٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ لِنْتَ لَهُمْ وَلَوْ كُنْتَ فَظًّا غَلِيظَ الْقَلْبِ لَانفَضُّوا
مِنْ حَوْلِكَ فَاعْفُ عَنْهُمْ وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ وَشَاوِرْهُمْ فِي الْأَمْرِ﴾

So by mercy from Allāh, you were lenient with them. And if you had been rude and harsh of heart, they would have disbanded from about you. So pardon them and ask forgiveness for them and consult them in the matter. (3:159)

The Most High also says:

﴿ادْفَعْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ فَإِذَا الَّذِي بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَهُ عَدَاوَةٌ كَأَنَّهُ وَلِيٌّ حَمِيمٌ﴾

Repel [evil] by that which is better; and thereupon the one whom between you and him is enmity [becomes] as though he were a devoted friend. (41:34)

The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ would respond to anyone who called upon him, and he would accept gifts and give in return for them. He used to joke with his Companions, mix with them, talk to them and play with their children. He would accept invitations from freemen and slaves, bondswomen and the destitute. He used to visit the sick in the furthest corners of Madīnah and would accept people's excuses.

Anas رضي الله عنه said: "Whenever anyone spoke into the Prophet's ﷺ ear, he would turn his head [towards the man] so that the man himself would turn his head away; and whenever anyone took his hand, he ﷺ would give him his other hand to take. He would be the first to give the greeting of 'peace' (*salām*) to anyone he met, and the first to shake hands with his Companions. He always honoured anyone who came to see him, perhaps spreading out his garment for them and giving them the cushion upon which he had been seated; if the person refused, he would insist that they sat on it. He never interrupted anyone when they were speaking and had the friendliest smile."

With regard to compassion, kindness and mercy, these are characteristics with which Allāh has described His Messenger ﷺ. It is also narrated that a Bedouin requested something from him ﷺ and he gave it. The Bedouin said, “You have acted neither well nor decently.” The Muslims became angry and arose, so the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ signalled to them to restrain themselves. Then the Bedouin added something. He said, “You have acted well. May Allāh reward you with good.” He ﷺ said, “The likeness of myself and this man is as that of a man whose camel has wandered off and the people follow it, only causing it to flee further. Its owner calls to them: ‘Leave my camel to me; for I am gentler with her than you.’ Then he approaches it head on, taking it some offal, and manages to entice it back, until it lies down. Then he saddles it and mounts it. Indeed, had I not restrained you when the man said what he said, so that you had killed him, he would have entered the Fire.”³⁸



The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ also said: “None of you should inform me of anything [wrong] which my Companions have done; for I like to meet you all with a clear heart.”³⁹


As for loyalty, being faithful to agreements and maintaining family ties, the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ occupied the highest moral standing in these regards. It is narrated that if he were given a present, he would say: “Take it to so-and-so’s house. She was a friend of Khadijah; she loved Khadijah.”⁴⁰



Once, a delegation came to him ﷺ and he went about serving them himself. His Companions said, “Leave it to us!” but he ﷺ said, “They honoured our companions, so I would like to repay them.”⁴¹

Despite his high standing and elevated status, the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ was the humblest of people and the least arrogant. Once,

he went out to his Companions, leaning on a stick. They arose and he said, “Do not get up as the non-Arabs do.”⁴²

He  used to visit the destitute and he would sit with his Companions as one of them, once the gathering was concluded. When a man tried to kiss his hand, he  snatched it from him, saying: “This is how the non-Arabs behave with their kings. I am not a king, but a man from amongst you.”⁴³


He  was also the most just and truthful of people and the most trustworthy. He was known amongst Quraysh as ‘the Trustworthy’. He would never blame anyone for another’s fault, nor believe one person over another.


In sum, good character reached its pinnacle with the Messenger of Allāh , in adherence to the Message of the Noble Qur’ān. He  himself said: “I was only sent to perfect good character.”⁴⁴

³³ Imām Aḥmad.

³⁴ Bukhārī and Muslim.

³⁵ Bayhaqī, *Ash-Shu‘ab*.

³⁶ The ḥadīth ends: “I still see myself at the Battle of Badr, as we kept close by the Prophet , while he was the closest of us to the enemy. He was one of the fiercest fighters on that day.” [Muslim, Aḥmad, Nasā’i, Ṭabarānī, Bayhaqī].

³⁷ Many such sayings have been reported from the Messenger of Allāh , which Tirmidhī reported under ‘characteristics’ and Ibn Mājah reported under ‘asceticism’.

³⁸ Bazzār and Ibn Ḥibbān.

³⁹ Abū Dāwūd and Tirmidhī.

⁴⁰ Bukhārī, *Al-Adab al-Mufrad*, with similar wording.

41 Bayhaqī, *Ash-Shu‘ab*.

42 The ḥadīth concludes: “glorifying one another.” [Abū Dāwūd and Ibn Mājah]

43 Ṭabarānī, *Al-Mu‘jam al-Awsaṭ*.

44 Aḥmad and Bazzār, in their respective *Musnads*.

Lesson Thirteen

THE MIRACLES OF THE MESSENGER OF ALLĀH ﷺ

The miracles of the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ, which Allāh manifested through him in order to substantiate him in delivering His Message, are numerous. The most important and clearest of these is the Noble Qur'ān, which the Arabs were incapable of imitating, having been challenged to do so by His Words:

﴿وَأِنْ كُنْتُمْ فِي رَيْبٍ مِّمَّا نَزَّلْنَا عَلَىٰ عَبْدِنَا فَأْتُوا بِسُورَةٍ مِّثْلِهِ وَادْعُوا شُهَدَاءَكُمْ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ فَإِنْ لَمْ تَفْعَلُوا وَلَنْ تَفْعَلُوا فَاتَّقُوا النَّارَ الَّتِي وَقُودُهَا النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارَةُ أُعِدَّتْ لِلْكَافِرِينَ﴾

And if you are in doubt about what We have sent down upon Our servant, then produce a chapter the like thereof; and call upon your witnesses other than Allāh, if you should be truthful. But if you do not—and you will never be able to—then fear the Fire, whose fuel is men and stones, prepared for the disbelievers. (2:23–24)

Notice how Allāh decrees this incapability for them, even though the Qur'ān had been revealed in their native tongue, and they themselves were masters of language—of which they were immensely proud.

The inimitability of the Qur'ān derives from four matters:

First: its beautiful composition, internal consistency, eloquence and extraordinary level of rhetoric which was unprecedented amongst the Arabs.

Second: its strange metre and unfamiliar style, which differed from Arab speech, poetry and prose.

Third: the references it contained to unknown events, which had not yet occurred but would later transpire as predicted, such as the Most High's Words in *Sūrat al-Fath*:

﴿لَتَدْخُلَنَّ الْمَسْجِدَ الْحَرَامَ إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ آمِنِينَ مُحَلِّقِينَ رُءُوسَكُمْ وَمُقَصِّرِينَ﴾

You will surely enter the Sacred Mosque, if Allāh wills, in safety, with your heads shaved and [hair] shortened. (48:27)

And His Words in *Sūrat ar-Rūm*:

﴿وَهُمْ مِّنْ بَعْدِ غَلِبِهِمْ سَيَغْلِبُونَ فِي بَضْعِ سِنِينَ﴾

But they, after their defeat, will be victorious—within a few years. (30:3–4)

And His Words:

﴿لِيُظْهِرَهُ عَلَى الدِّينِ كُلِّهِ﴾

to make it prevail over all religion (61:9)

And His Words:

﴿وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْكُمْ وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَيَسْتَخْلِفَنَّهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ كَمَا اسْتَخْلَفَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ وَلَيُمَكِّنَنَّ لَهُمْ دِينَهُمُ الَّذِي ارْتَضَىٰ لَهُمْ وَلَيُبَدِّلَنَّهُمْ مِّنْ بَعْدِ خَوْفِهِمْ أَمْنًا﴾

Allāh has promised those of you who have believed and done righteous deeds that He will surely grant them succession upon Earth, just as He granted it to those before them; and that He will surely establish for them their religion which He has preferred for them; and that He will surely substitute for them, after their fear, security. (24:55)

These verses, and others, are amongst the major signs of the inimitability of the Qur'ān.

Fourth: the information which the Qur'ān imparts concerning past centuries and bygone peoples. This, despite the fact that Allāh's Messenger ﷺ could neither read nor write; nor did he engage in study or have a teacher. Indeed, the People of Scripture (*Ahl al-Kitāb*) would often ask him something about which he knew but little; then Allāh would inform him about the truth of that matter.

Further evidence that this Qur'ān is not of human authorship is the beauty which is conveyed to those who listen to it and the awe which its recitation inspires. Allāh Most High says:

﴿تَقشَعُرُّ مِنْهُ جُلُودُ الَّذِينَ يَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ ثُمَّ تَلِينُ جُلُودُهُمْ وَقُلُوبُهُمْ إِلَىٰ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ﴾

The skins of those who fear their Lord shiver thereat; then their skins and their hearts relax at the remembrance of Allāh. (39:23)

The Most High also says:

﴿لَوْ أَنزَلْنَاهُ هَٰذَا الْقُرْآنَ عَلَىٰ جَبَلٍ لَّرَأَيْتَهُ خَاشِعًا مُّتَصَدِّعًا مِّنْ خَشْيَةِ اللَّهِ﴾

If We had sent down this Qur'ān upon a mountain, you would have seen it humbled and breaking assunder from fear of Allāh. (59:21)


The miracles of the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ also include water springing from between his fingers and becoming abundant as a result of his blessedness. Anas رضي الله عنه said: “I saw the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ when it was approaching the time for the Afternoon Prayer (*Ṣalāt al-‘Aṣr*). The people looked for water to perform ablution (*wuḍū’*) but did not find any.” [Anas] said: “Then I saw water spring from between his رضي الله عنه fingers. The people performed ablution thoroughly.” He was asked, “How many were you?” He replied, “Some three hundred.” Similar incidents were related by other Companions.


This type of miracle also includes instances of food becoming abundant as a result of his رضي الله عنه blessedness. Ṭalḥah رضي الله عنه narrated that he رضي الله عنه fed seventy or eighty men from some barley loaves which Anas had brought under his arm. He رضي الله عنه called for them and they were divided up. He said over them whatever Allāh willed that he say. Jābir رضي الله عنه and others narrated something similar.

His رضي الله عنه miracles also include healing the sick and disabled. Thus, at the Battle of Uhud, Qatādah ibn an-Nu‘mān رضي الله عنه was wounded in the eye, causing it to fall out onto his cheek. The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ put it back in place. Thereafter, it was his best eye and the sharpest of the two.

At the Battle of Khaybar, one of ‘Alī’s eyes رضي الله عنه became inflamed. Allāh’s Messenger ﷺ wiped it and the inflammation disappeared. Further ḥadīths of this nature have been narrated in the rigorously authenticated (*ṣaḥīḥ*) collections.

Also amongst his رضي الله عنه miracles are the supplications which Allāh answered for him and the knowledge which Allāh gave him of things to come. Thus, he promised his Companions victory over their enemies and conquest of Jerusalem, Yemen, Syria and Iraq, all of

which came to pass. May Allāh bestow peace and blessings upon our master, Muḥammad, and upon his family and Companions. May He grant us success in following the example of his  noble character⁴⁵.

⁴⁵ Refer to the full account of the biography (*Sirah*) of the Prophet  by the author in *Nūr al-Yaqīn fī Sirat Sayyid al-Mursalīn*.

Lesson Fourteen

THE CALIPHATE (*KHILĀFAH*) OF ABŪ BAKR ﷺ

When the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ [died and] was united with the most elevated company, his Companions from the Emigrants and the Helpers gathered at the Shelter (*Saqifah*) of Banū Šā‘idah to appoint his successor (*khalifah*). The Helpers wanted the successor to be one of them, so Abū Bakr narrated to them the hadīth of the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ: “The Imāms are from Quraysh.”⁴⁶ They yielded to this and abandoned their claim to succession.

Meanwhile, Banū Hāshim wanted succession to go to ‘Alī ibn Abi Ṭālib ﷺ. However, the majority were in favour of appointing Abū Bakr ﷺ, since the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ had commanded him to lead the prayer in his ﷺ stead during his illness. The believers said: “The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ was content for him to lead us in religious matters; should we not then be content for to lead us in worldly matters?”





Hence, allegiance was pledged to Abū Bakr on 13th Rabī‘ al-Awwal 11/632. When this was completed, he ascended the pulpit (*minbar*) and, after praising and extolling Allāh, he said:


O people! I have been appointed as your leader, yet I am not the best amongst you. So if I act well, follow me; and if I go astray, correct me. Truthfulness is good faith and lies are betrayal. The weak person amongst you has a strong case with me, until I secure his right for him; and the strong person amongst you has a weak case with me, until I take what is rightful from him, Allāh willing. Let none of you

claim to have struggled in the way of Allāh, for any people who do so are humbled by Allāh. Obey me as long as I obey Allāh and His Messenger; but if I disobey Allāh, you are not obliged to obey me. Now, stand for the prayer, may Allāh have mercy on you.

THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF ABŪ BAKR

The Deliverance of Usāmah's Army

Abū Bakr's first act was to dispatch the army commanded by Usāmah ihn Zayd  which had been mustered by the Prophet , to Ubnā⁴⁷. Before he set out, Abū Bakr gave Usāmah these instructions: "Do not commit acts of betrayal, treachery, or excess; do not inflict cruel punishments; do not kill children, elderly men, or women; do not cut down or burn date palms, or cut down fruit trees; and do not slaughter sheep, cows or camels, except for food. When you pass by a people who have secluded themselves in places of worship, leave them and the places in which they have secluded themselves; but when you pass by a people who have shaved the centre of their heads and left the hair around it like a headband, strike their heads with the sword. When food is brought to you, mention the Name of Allāh. O Usāmah, do as the Prophet of Allāh  commanded you in the lands of Qaḍā'ah⁴⁸; then proceed to Abil, and fulfil the command of the Messenger of Allāh  in full."

Usāmah went forth with his army and accomplished that which the Messenger of Allāh  had commanded. He dispatched his troops to the lands of Qaḍā'ah and invaded Ubnā, taking prisoners and booty. He then returned to Madīnah, victorious, after forty days.

Instances of Apostasy

After the death of the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ, Islām was afflicted by a catastrophe which, had it not been for the wisdom and courage of Abū Bakr, would have weakened the religion of Islām and disunited the Muslims. Soon after learning of the death of Allāh's Messenger ﷺ, the Arab tribes apostatised, leaving only Quraysh in Madīnah, Thaḳīf in Ṭā'if and a few others adhering to Islām. The transgressors were of two kinds: those who had left the religion completely and those who withheld payment of zakāt.

Abū Bakr's view was that the Muslims should fight those withholding zakāt in the same manner as the apostates, since withholding zakāt constitutes an attack upon the Prayer—or rather, upon all aspects of the religion. 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb رضي الله عنه, at first opposed this view but later became convinced that Abū Bakr's view was correct. So Abū Bakr rallied his forces, disregarding the substantial worries relating to the relatively small size of his army and the great number of his enemies, and trusting the Promise of Allāh Most High in His Words:

﴿إِنْ تَنْصُرُوا اللَّهَ يَنْصُرْكُمْ وَيُثَبِّتْ أَقْدَامَكُمْ﴾

If you support Allāh, He will support you and make your feet firm. (47:7)

He mustered eleven armies, led by men willing to sacrifice their lives in supporting the Religion of Allāh⁴⁹. They advanced in Allāh's Protection and Care. Divine Aid was their ally in every battle, until they had brought every apostate back to the religion and the zakāt had been paid by all who had withheld it. Thus, the Arabs were brought together upon Islām and Allāh united their authority.

Iraq

With this complete, Abū Bakr ﷺ turned his attention to spreading the justice and equality of Islām to other nations, whose rulers and nobles saw themselves as elevated above the general populace. Considering them servile subjects with no intrinsic value of their own, they treated them with humiliating injustice and oppression.

At that time, Islām's neighbouring empires were the Persian Empire in the east and the Byzantine Empire in the north and the west. Abū Bakr began with the Persians and Khālīd ibn al-Walīd was entrusted with being the first to establish Islām in their land. This was at the beginning of the month of Muḥarram, 12/633. Abū Bakr commanded him to start with Uballah, a Persian port on the Arabian Gulf at the mouth of the River Tigris. Meanwhile, 'Ayāḍ ibn Ghanam was appointed to attack the Persians from Northern Iraq. Abū Bakr commanded him to start with Muṣayyakh, a village on the River Euphrates in Northern Iraq.

Khālīd advanced to Uballah and conquered it. He then proceeded north along the Euphrates, conquering the towns along the river, until he reached Firāḍ, on the border between Iraq and Syria. At this point, Abū Bakr dispatched Khālīd to Syria, in support of the army there. Khālīd appointed Muthannā ibn Ḥārithah ash-Shaybānī as his deputy in Iraq and set up his headquarters in Ḥīrah. Thus, the Persian Empire lost the western bank of the Euphrates, which is referred to as the countryside of Iraq.

Byzantium

Having dispatched Khālīd ibn al-Walīd to Iraq, Abū Bakr mobilised Khālīd ibn Sa'īd ibn al-ʿĀṣ and sent him to confront the nobles of Syria. He advanced and was met there by the many armies of Syria

and so called on Abū Bakr for reinforcements. In response, Abū Bakr mustered four armies, led by four Muslim heroes⁵⁰. These forces gathered at Yarmūk, a valley in the south-west of Syria, where they were met by the Byzantine forces. The Muslims sent to Abū Bakr for further reinforcements, so he wrote to Khālīd ibn al-Walīd in Iraq, commanding him to journey to support the Muslim forces at Yarmūk. This he did and the four amīrs submitted to his leadership. He then organised the armies such that they were able to strike a devastating blow to the Byzantines which utterly defeated them. In the meantime, there arrived a correspondence from Madīnah with the news of the death of Abū Bakr ﷺ.

The death of As-Siddiq (the Truthful One) ﷺ

On 7 Jumādā'l-Ākhirah 13/634 Abū Bakr ﷺ, developed a fever. When his illness worsened, he appointed 'Umar ﷺ as his successor. This is his last will and testament:

In the Name of Allāh, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful: This is the last will and testament of Abū Bakr, Successor to Muḥammad ﷺ, during his last hours in this world and his first in the Hereafter—the time at which the unbeliever (*kāfir*) believes and the sinner develops fear of Allāh (*taqwā*). I have appointed 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb as my successor over you, and I could not appoint anyone better. If he is forbearing and just, this is how I know him to be and my opinion of him; but if he oppresses and behaves otherwise, then I have no knowledge of the unseen and my intention is for the best. Each person will be recompensed for what he has earned and the oppressors will come to know their destiny.⁵¹

Abū Bakr died on 8 Jumādā al-Ākhirah 13/634⁵².


46 Ṭayālīsī, Aḥmad, Ḥākim and others.


47 A place in Syria in the vicinity of Balqā'. This army was mentioned previously on p??.

48 Qaḍā'ah ruled the land between Syria, the Ḥijāz and Iraq.

49 He ranked them as follows: 1. Khālīd ibn al-Walīd, who was sent to confront Ṭulayḥah al-Kadhdhāb and Mālīk ibn Nuwayrah; 2. 'Ikrimah ibn Abī Jahl, sent against Musaylimah al-Kadhdhāb; 3. Shuraḥbīl ibn Ḥasanah, sent behind 'Ikrimah; 4. Muhājir ibn Abī Umayyah, dispatched against the forces of Aswad al-ʿAnsī; 5. Ḥudhayfah ibn Miḥṣan, sent against the people of Dabā in Oman; 6. 'Arfajah ibn Harthamah, sent against the people of Mahrah; 7. Suwayd ibn Muqarrin, to Tuhāmat al-Yemen; 8. 'Alā' ibn al-Ḥaḍramī, to Bahrain; Ṭurayfah ibn Ḥājiz, sent against Banū Salīm and their allies from Hawāzin; 9. 'Amr ibn al-ʿĀṣ, to Qaḍā'ah; 10. Khālīd ibn Sa'īd, to the Syrian hills.



50 These were: 'Amr ibn al-ʿĀṣ, who was sent to Palestine; Shuraḥbīl ibn al-Ḥasanah, sent to Jordan; Yazīd ibn Abī Sufyān, sent to Balqā'; and Abū 'Ubaydah ibn al-Jarrāḥ, sent to Homs (Ḥums).

51 This testament is confirmation of nomination for the role of Caliph—not appointment—since 'Umar  did not become Caliph as a consequence of it, but rather through the public pledge of allegiance (*bay'ah*) which he received from the Muslims.


52 See a more detailed account of the Caliphate of the Ṣiddīq  : in *The History of the Four Caliphs*, by the author.

Lesson Fifteen

THE CALIPHATE OF ‘UMAR IBN AL-KHAṬṬĀB

Allegiance was pledged to ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb  on the morning of the death of Abū Bakr . When this was done, he ascended the pulpit and said: “The Arabs are like nothing but a submissive camel⁵³ that follows its master, so the master may choose where he leads it. As for myself, by the Lord of the Ka‘bah, I will surely burden you upon the way.”


Iraq under ‘Umar


Following the death of Abū Bakr, ‘Umar appointed Abū ‘Ubayd ibn Mas‘ūd ath-Thaqafī as amīr of the army in Iraq. After several battles against the Persians, Abū ‘Ubayd  was killed. When news of this reached cUmar, and that the Persians had strengthened their forces with the aim of ousting the Muslims from their lands, he said: “By Allāh, I will strike the Persian Kings with the Arab Kings.” Then he called upon the Arab leaders, who hastened to muster a huge army from their tribes.

‘Umar chose Sa‘d ibn Abi Waqqāṣ as their commander and he advanced to Qādisiyyah, near Kufah (Kūfah). From there he dispatched a group of senior Muslims to invite the Persians to enter Islām or to accept Islamic rule and payment of the *jizyah* tax. The invitation was not taken seriously and the Persian rulers mobilised a great force, one hundred thousand strong, led by their most senior commander, Rustum. This force advanced until it faced the Muslims at Qādisiyyah. This was the scene of the greatest battle between the

two sides, lasting three days and nights. Eventually, victory belonged to the Muslims and the Persians suffered a dreadful defeat.

Thereafter, Sa'd proceeded to conquer all lands in his path, until he reached Madā'in, the capital of the rulers of Persia, on the Tigris. He conquered it and assailed the Palace of Khosrow, which he made his headquarters.



However, it was the opinion of 'Umar  that the Muslim headquarters should not be separated from him by so large a river, so he ordered Sa'd to choose a position on the west coast of the Tigris. Sa'd duly selected the site of Kufah and thus it was that the city was established in the year 17/637. Next, the city of Basrah was founded; then Sa'd dispatched companies to occupy the inner lands of Persia. Thus, its towns and regions were conquered.

Nevertheless, the conquest of Persia's towns and cities was not completed under Sa'd because 'Umar  deposed him and appointed Nu'mān ibn Muqarrin. Before the end of 'Umar's reign, the Persian and other neighbouring lands conquered by the Muslims were bordered to the west by the Euphrates, stretching east to the lands of Sindh and beyond the River Indus. To the west they were bordered by the Arabian Gulf, stretching north to Khazaria, Armenia and Russian territories.

The Muslims met the Persian forces in many battles, in which their standard was never lowered. Neither did the Muslim army ever flee, although they were relatively few in number and their enemy were numerous. Their opponents also had more knowledge of military organisation. Why, then, did the Muslims achieve such overwhelming victories? It was the result of their unity and heartfelt concord. Such was the case that they were as many bodies with but

one heart and one aim: spreading the justice of Islām to all corners of the Earth.


Byzantium

Abū Bakr  died as the Muslims were gaining victory in the Battle of Yarmūk. Then ʿUmar  became Caliph and appointed Abū ʿUbaydah ʿĀmir ibn al-Jarrāḥ over the army in place of Khālīd ibn al-Walīd. Khālīd did not object to fight in the way of Allāh under the command of Abū ʿUbaydah, since neither of them had as their objective leadership or renown.

Abū ʿUbaydah advanced to Damascus, to which he laid siege until it was captured. He then took Ḥumṣ (Homs) peacefully; then Maʿarrāh; then Lādhiqiyyah (Latakia). When the ruler of Byzantium saw that the Muslims were serious opponents, he relinquished Syria and withdrew to Constantinople, despairing of success against them. The Muslims then proceeded to conquer Syrian lands until most of them were in their possession.

ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ proceeded to Jerusalem and laid siege to it. When the people of Jerusalem realised that they would be unable to resist the Muslims, they pleaded for reconciliation, stipulating that the Commander of the Faithful (Amīr al-Muʾminīn) should be the one to contract the agreement. Hence, ʿAmr wrote to ʿUmar, who came to Jerusalem from Madīnah and reached a settlement with its people, ensuring them security for themselves, their property and their churches. When ʿUmar entered the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and sat in its courtyard, the time for prayer arrived; so he said to the Patriarch, “I want to pray.” The Patriarch told him to pray where he was but ʿUmar refused, praying on the step which was separate from the door of the church. When he had finished, he said to the

Patriarch: “If I had prayed inside the church, Muslims would adopt it later.” It is said of that place: “This is where ‘Umar prayed.’



He  then appointed governors over Syria, having divided it into governorates. He then returned to Madīnah.

It was also during the reign of ‘Umar that Egypt was conquered. This was the last action against Byzantium by the Muslims during his era. His was the greatest Islamic age, due to the justice and kindness with which he treated the populace who were in his charge, and his concern for their situation.

‘Umar was the first to adopt the use of an exchequer (*bayt al-māl*). Its income came from the zakāt of the Muslims, the *jizyah* tax paid by the protected peoples, and the estates of those Muslims who left behind no heirs. It was spent on all who had a right to it in complete fairness and ‘Umar took nothing from it personally, except that which was accepted as appropriate for himself and his family.

It was also during his time as Caliph that the Muslims established a new calendar, starting from the Migration (*Hijrah*). This date was chosen as the date from which Islām became strong. The start of the year was brought forward to the beginning of the month of Muḥarram, in order to coincide with the start of the Arab year.

The Martyrdom of ‘Umar

Muslims were not afflicted by any greater catastrophe, after the death of the Messenger of Allāh , than the murder of ‘Umar . He was attacked by a Zoroastrian slave of Mughīrah ibn Shu‘bah, named Abū Lu’lu’ah, as he stood in prayer.

When the Companions realised that the blow was fatal, they said to him: “Instruct us, O Commander of the Faithful.”



He replied, “I am burdened with your affairs in life and in death. I had hoped to have earned some respite therefrom. It is not my responsibility, nor is it for me to decide. But if I appoint a successor, so was a successor appointed by someone better than me; and if I leave you to decide, so were you left to decide by someone better than me.” Then he said, “I find no one more deserving of this matter than this group with whom the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ was pleased when he died.” He then named: ‘Alī, ‘Uthmān, Zubayr, Sa‘d, Ṭalḥah and ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān ibn ‘Awf.



He ﷺ died on 26 Dhū’l-Ḥijjah, 23/644.

53 This refers to a docile, obliging camel that submits for fear of being rebuked or beaten and moves as required voluntarily and without trouble. This is a good characterisation of the Muslim Ummah, which was attentive and obedient.


Lesson Sixteen

THE CALIPHATE OF ‘UTHMĀN




The committee of six men specified by ‘Umar  in his final will and testament to choose the Commander of the Faithful convened, and a majority voted in favour of ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān . He was pledged allegiance as Caliph at the beginning of the year 24/644.

When allegiance was pledged to ‘Uthmān, he was over seventy years old and given to bashfulness, gentility and kindness. He followed ‘Umar, the stouthearted, who had unsheathed the sword of justice against anyone who did not follow the straight path. As such, his character contributed to the outbreak of dissension in the cities, through men whose only concern was to divide Muslim authority. Basrah, Kufah and Egypt were centres of dissension. Those involved made their focal argument the virtue of ‘Alī over ‘Uthmān and the former’s greater right than anyone to the Caliphate, claiming that the Messenger of Allāh  had instructed this, and that no one commits a greater wrong than he who fails to fulfil the instruction of the Messenger of Allāh .

Intending to initiate evil actions, they attacked and criticised his governors. A delegation went to Madīnah apparently demanding that these governors be deposed. Secretly, however, they wished to be rid of ‘Uthmān. After fruitless negotiations they occupied Madīnah and besieged ‘Uthmān in his house. Then they killed him, wrongfully and maliciously in the sacred month and the sacred city, on 18 Dhū’l-Ḥijjah, 35/656, aged eighty-two. That was the ill-fated day upon which the door was opened to evil and division amongst the Muslims.

Relatively few further conquests took place during the reign of ‘Uthmān , except in the first six years of his rule. During this period the Muslims conquered North Africa, in the direction of Dongola (Dunqulah) when ‘Abd Allāh ibn Sa‘d ibn Abī Sarḥ was governor of Egypt; in addition to some Persian lands which had rebelled⁵⁴. The latter period of his rule, however, witnessed dissension of a kind which would have prevented any society from performing righteous deeds.

THE CALIPHATE OF ‘ALĪ

After the murder of ‘Uthmān , the majority of the people of Madīnah pledged allegiance to ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib . In ‘Alī’s view, this meant that the pledge of allegiance (bay‘ah) was complete, even though some of the Companions of the Messenger of Allāh  had refrained from pledging their allegiance. Hence, he ascended the pulpit and said, after praising and extolling Allāh:



O people! Allāh revealed a guiding Book, in which good and evil are made clear, therefore take what is good and leave what is evil. Be sure to perform the compulsory acts (*farā’id*) and render them to Allāh Most High; He will render you unto Paradise (*Jannah*). Allāh has made sacrosanct that which is inviolable and these things are well known. He has placed the inviolability of a Muslim above all else that is inviolable, and has secured the rights of Muslims by means of sincerity (*ikhhlāṣ*) and belief in the Oneness of Allāh (*tawḥīd*). A Muslim is someone from whose tongue and hand the Muslims are safe, except by right. It is unlawful to take the blood of any Muslim person, except that which is obligatory. Embark upon general affairs knowing that death



will come to each of you personally. The people are before you and behind you is the Last Hour (*Sā'ah*), spurring you on; so lighten your load and you will make it. Only the Hereafter awaits people. O slaves of Allāh, fear Allāh in His lands and His slaves. You are responsible even for patches of earth and for beasts. Obey Allāh and do not defy Him. If you see something good, adopt it; and if you see something evil, leave it.

﴿وَاذْكُرُوا إِذْ أَنْتُمْ قَلِيلٌ مُسْتَضْعَفُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ﴾

And remember when you were few and oppressed in the land. (8:26)

Then he descended.

At the beginning of his reign, 'Alī  deposed all the governors appointed by 'Uthmān  and replaced them. However, the community in the cities were not united in support of 'Alī's caliphate. Some of them opposed him because he had failed to support 'Uthmān against the rebels. One of these was Mu'āwiyah, who had refused to pledge allegiance to 'Alī and announced his refusal to do so. 'Alī therefore determined to go to war against him.

As 'Alī prepared for war against Mu'āwiyah, news reached him that the Mother of the Believers (Umm al-Mu'minīn), 'Ā'ishah , had set out for battle, accompanied by Zubayr and Ṭalḥah . They were angry at 'Uthmān's murder and demanding restitution for his death. On seeing this, Ali decided to begin by forcing them back, before preparing to face Mu'āwiyah. He set out from Madīnah, passing Kufah, and came to Basrah, where there was a great army led by Zubayr and Ṭalḥah. Communications took place between the two sides attempting to achieve reconciliation. These would have been

successful, had it not been for those who sought to maintain the discord—those who had rebelled against ‘Uthmān—and instigated fighting against the wishes of both ‘Alī and his opponents. Thus, the battle was taken up by both sides.

It was a fierce battle, from which ‘Alī emerged victorious⁵⁵. With the outcome decided in his favour, he sent the Mother of the Believers back to Madīnah and himself returned to Kufah, which he made the seat of his caliphate. From here, he set out with his armies to fight Mu‘āwiyah and the people of Syria. On learning of this, Mu‘āwiyah advanced to meet him with his force. The two armies met on the plain of Şiffin, on the Euphrates, east of Aleppo (Ḥalab). After an unfruitful correspondence between the opposing sides, war was inevitable. Hence, the two armies fought a number of battles, the greatest of which was on 10 Şafar, 37/657. When the Syrian forces realised that they were almost overcome, they raised their copies of the Qur’an and called to the people of Iraq: “We call you to the Book of Allāh, which is between us and you. Who will protect the women and children of Syria after the people of Syria have been annihilated? And who will protect the women and children of Iraq after the people of Iraq have been annihilated?” The companions of All, having glimpsed victory, disagreed about how to react to this. One group were in favour of responding to the Book of Allāh, while another saw it as a deception; however, the former were more numerous, so ‘Alī was forced to agree with them.

The opposing parties agreed to arbitration by two men, one from the people of Iraq—this was Abū Mūsā’l-Ash‘arī⁵⁶—and one to represent the people of Syria—‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ—who would meet at Dawmat al-Jandal during Ramaḍān. Then both ‘Alī and Mu‘āwiyah returned with their armies to their respective seats of power, the former to Kufah and the latter to Damascus. When the appointed time

arrived, the two arbitrators met and discussed the matter at hand. Eventually they agreed that both ‘Alī and Mu‘āwiyah should be deposed, but did not agree on who should be appointed as Caliph. Hence, they parted without having benefitted the Muslims at all. When the judgement reached ‘Alī, he did not accept it. Whilst benefitting Mu‘āwiyah, it also harmed ‘Alī, since a group of his soldiers denounced the arbitration and revolted against him. These were the group known as the Khārijites (*Khawārij*). When ‘Alī became embroiled in fighting them, Mu‘āwiyah set about seizing the lands loyal to Aḥ. Thus, he took Egypt, the Two Sanctuaries (Ḥaramayn) and Yemen while ‘Alī was busy dealing with the Khārijites.



In the year 40/661, three Khārijites plotted to kill ‘Alī, Mu‘āwiyah and ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ. They agreed to carry this out on the night of Friday 17 Ramaḍān.

‘Abd ar-Raḥmān ibn Muljam, whose lot it was to assassinate ‘Alī, approached him as he was leaving to perform the prayer. He struck ‘Alī on the forehead with a poisoned sword, inflicting a severe wound that would prove fatal.

As for the Khārijite assigned to assassinate ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ, he travelled to Egypt and waited for him to emerge on the agreed night. However, it was not ‘Amr who emerged, on account of an illness he was suffering from, but his representative⁵⁷. The Khārijite⁵⁸ killed him, thinking he was ‘Amr.

The Khārijite⁵⁹ assigned to assassinate Mu‘āwiyah wounded him but failed to kill him.

The Caliphate of Ḥasan ibn ‘Alī

Following the murder of ‘Alī , his troops inclined towards pledging allegiance to his son, Ḥasan ibn ‘Alī . However, Ḥasan saw that it was more befitting for the Muslims to extinguish the fire

that had ignited between them and to abandon fighting. He therefore sent a request of conditional reconciliation to Mu‘āwiyah. In response, Mu‘āwiyah sent him a sealed blank deed for Ḥasan to record whatever conditions he desired. The most important of these were: security for his army and for all of ‘Alī’s faction. Mu‘āwiyah consented to this.

With that, Ḥasan abdicated and the discord⁶⁰ was ended. Then allegiance was pledged to Mu‘āwiyah in the proper fashion.


54 It was during ﷺ his era that Yazdajard, the last King of Persia, was killed, with whose death the Sassanid dynasty came to an end. Also in his time, the Muslims conducted their first naval attack, conquering Cyprus in a battle famous for its masts.

Suyūṭī mentions that he ﷺ conquered the city of Rey in the year 24/644, in addition to conquering numerous Byzantine fortresses. He also took Bishapur (26/646); Qubrus, Arjan, Darabjard and the African plains and mountains (27/647); Iṣṭakhr (29/649); Jawr and many of the lands of Khorasan (Khurāsān), including Nishapur, Tus, Sarakhas, Merv and Bayhaq (30/650); and the lands of the Nubians (33/653).

Further achievements of ‘Uthmān ﷺ include his rebuilding and extension of the Prophet’s ﷺ Mosque (al-Masjid an-Nabawī) and extension of the Sacred Mosque (al-Masjid al-Ḥarām). One of his greatest deeds was to have copies made of the Qur’ānic text, which he had distributed to the cities.

55 This battle is referred to as the Battle of the Camel, since the fiercest fighting took place around the camel carrying the howdah of Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah. It has been reported that more than seventy were killed around the camel and that it was surrounded until it was



wounded and fell to the ground. See also: *‘Ā’ishah wa’s-Siyāsah*, by Ustādh Sa‘īd al-Afghānī.

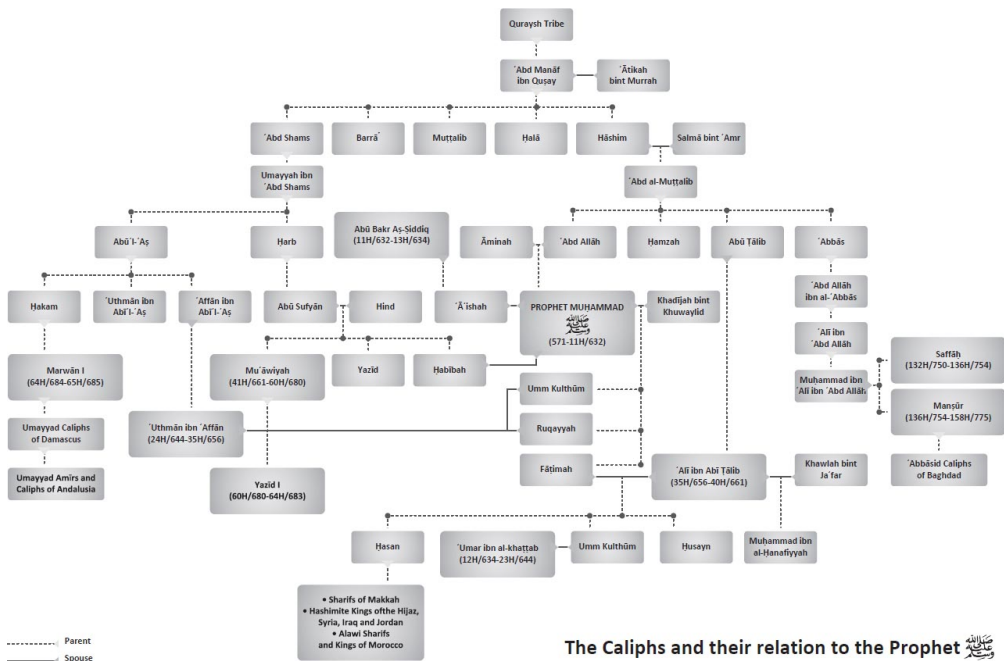
56 He is ‘Abdullāh ibn Qays al-Ash‘arī , the Companion from Yemen, whom Sayyidunā ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān appointed over Kufah (Kūfah). Since Kufah is in Iraq, he was said to be from the people of Iraq.

57 This was Ḥabīb ibn Khārijah as-Sahmī. His killer famously said: “I wanted ‘Amr, but Allāh wanted Khārijah.”

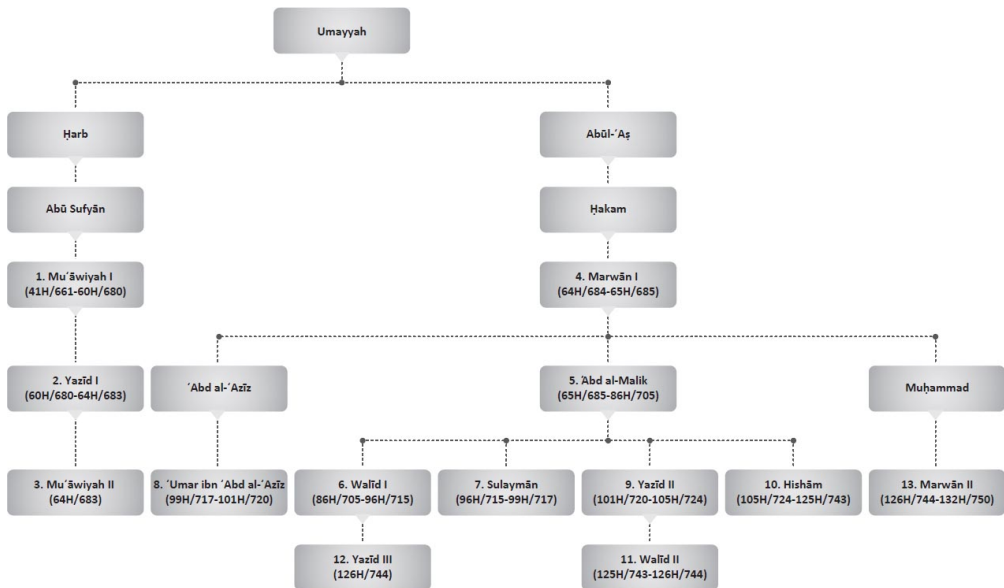
58 He was ‘Amr ibn Bakr at-Tamīmī. He was captured and killed.

59 This was Burk ibn ‘Ibād at-Tamīmī, who wounded Mu‘awiyah in the behind. He was captured and killed.

60 This took place in Rabī‘ al-Ākhir, 41/661, which was called the Year of the Community (‘Ām al-Jamā‘ah). Thus, the words of the Prophet  were realised through Sayyidunā Ḥasan: “This son of mine is a leader, and Allāh will reconcile two great parties of the believers through him.” [Bukhārī, Abū Dāwūd, Nasā’ī, Tirmidhī and Aḥmad.] Ḥasan  resided in Madīnah until he died in 49/469 (Another opinion is that he died in 50H). He was buried in al-Baqī‘.



The Caliphs and their relation to the Prophet ﷺ



Lineage of the Umayyad Caliphs

Lesson Seventeen

THE Umayyad Dynasty (*Ad-Dawlah al-Umayyiah*)

This dynasty traces its lineage to Umayyah ibn ‘Abd Shams ibn ‘Abd Manāf. ‘Abd Manāf was the great great grandfather of the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ, Muḥammad ibn ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib ibn Hāshim ibn ‘Abd Manāf.

Its reign began on the day when Ḥasan ibn ‘Alī ibn Abi Ṭālib surrendered the Caliphate to Mu‘āwiyah ibn Abi Sufyān ibn Ḥarb ibn Umayyah, in the month of Rabī‘ al-Ākhir, 41/661.

The dynasty produced thirteen caliphs from two families:

The Sufyānids, from whom there were three caliphs, and the Marwānids, from whom there were ten caliphs.⁶¹

The Umayyad Dynasty lasted until the end of the month of Dhū’l-Ḥijjah, 132/750, when it ended with the murder of Marwān ibn Muḥammad, the thirteenth Umayyad Caliph, at the hands of the ‘Abbāsids (Banū’l-‘Abbās).

The dynasty surrendered the Muslim lands of Asia and Africa.

Borders

These lands were bordered to the north by the lands of Turkmenistan, the Caspian Sea, a line passing through Asian Turkey and central Armenia, ending on the Mediterranean Coast near Antakya, and the Mediterranean Sea.

To the west, they were bordered by the Mediterranean Sea, North-west Africa (Maghrib), the Saharan Desert, the Red Sea and

Andalusia (Andalus).

To the south, they were bordered by Sudan and the Indian Ocean.

To the east, they were bordered by Sindh, Balochistan and the lands of Turkistan.

THE SUFYĀNIDS

1. MU‘ĀWIYAH


Mu‘āwiyah assumed the position of Caliph at a time when the hearts of the Muslim Ummah were disunited and their preferences divided. He united their hearts through the wisdom and noble character which Allāh had bestowed upon him. He was forbearing and rarely did anyone incite him to anger; and generous, such that he cared not what he spent in order to endear people to him. Hence, ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abbās said of him: “I have never seen a ruler with as mild a temper as Mu‘āwiyah.”

He relied on support from great men to administer the governorates, such as Zayd ibn Abī Sufyān, Amir of the Iraqis; ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ, Amīr of Egypt; and others. They ensured that the roads were safe and instilled fear in those who committed evil.

He maintained a powerful fleet in the Mediterranean Sea to strike fear in the hearts of the Byzantines.

During his reign the Island of Rhodes and North Ifrīqiyah (Tunis and Algeria) were conquered.



He also sent an army, led by his son Yazīd, to conquer Constantinople. They besieged it for a time but failed to conquer it⁶².

Mu‘āwiyah  died in the year 60/680⁶³, after authorising his son, Yazīd, to rule after him⁶⁴.

2. YAZĪD I

Allegiance was pledged to him as Caliph following the death of his father. During his reign, the Ummah fell into a state of discord and three major incidents occurred which have rendered his name hated until this day:

The Murder of Ḥusayn

When allegiance was pledged to Yazīd, Ḥusayn refused to do so. Immediately after this, correspondence reached him from the people of Iraq, inviting him to journey to them in order that they might pledge allegiance to him and remove Yazīd from power. Ḥusayn  was misled by these invitations and set out to make the journey, accompanied by his family and dependents, without affording the matter due preparation. On arriving in Karbala (Karbālā’), he was met by an Iraqi army, sent by the Amīr of Iraq, ‘Ubayd Allāh ibn Ziyād. He called on Ḥusayn to surrender, but the latter refused, so the Iraqi army fought him and he was killed ⁶⁵.

The Battle of Ḥarrah

Two years after allegiance had been pledged to Yazīd, some men of Madīnah incited its people to overthrow him and to pledge allegiance to one of their number.⁶⁶ However, they had neglected to compare their own strength with that of their opponents. Yazīd dispatched to them an army under the command of Muslim ibn ‘Uqbah al-Marri, who went to Madīnah and surrounded them. The rebels then emerged and a fierce battle was waged against them, in

which most of them were killed. After they had been routed, Madīnah was looted for three days. This was the first time that such degradation had been inflicted upon Madīnah, the Sanctuary of the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ. Responsibility for this lies with those of its people who had revolted rashly, over-confident in their small numbers and weak preparations.

The Seige of the Ka'bah

ʿAbd Allāh ibn Zubayr had refused to pledge allegiance to Yazīd and sought protection in the Sanctuary of Makkah. Yazīd commanded Muslim ibn ʿUqbah to go to him there after the Battle of Ḥarrah, which he did, laying siege to Ibn Zubayr. However, Yazīd died⁶⁷ during the course of the siege and the army returned to Syria without anything occurring.

It is the author's view that contradicting the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ and behaving in a manner contrary to reason leads to failure and disunity. It is from the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ that if a leader contravenes the rulings of Islamic Law, he should be advised as to what is right. If he does not correct his actions, but persists in his error so that it becomes necessary to revolt against him and to depose him, this should only take place once there is sufficient force to oppose him. Self-delusion and deception of the Muslims, on the other hand, rarely result in any good.

3. MUʿĀWIYAH II

On Yazīd's death in 64/683, leading men within the state pledged allegiance to his son, Muʿāwiyah. However, he did not regard

himself as entirely capable of managing the affairs of the Ummah, and therefore abdicated⁶⁸. A rational person does not force himself into straits from which he cannot extricate himself.

61 See figure: Lineage of the Umayyad Caliphs.

62 The Siege of Constantinople took place in the year 48/668 and included a group of the Companions of the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ. Abū Ayyūb al-Anṣārī ﷺ died during the siege and was buried by the wall of Constantinople.

63 Also during his era, the city of Kairouan (Qayrawān) was built, census records were established and the postal system was reformed in all governorates.

64 For a more detailed account, see: Munīr al-Ghaḍbān, *Mu‘āwiyah ibn Abī Sufyān*.

65 This occurred on Friday 10 Muḥarram, 61/680. On that day, sixteen men of his household were martyred, as well as sixty-four of his supporters.

66 The Battle of Ḥarrah took place on 28 Dhī'l-Ḥijjah, 63/683. Ibn Ḥazm said: "It is the greatest disaster of Islām."

67 He died in the month of Rabi‘ al-Awwal, 64/683, aged merely thirty odd years old.

68 He remained Caliph for approximately forty days. Then he gathered the people and addressed them, saying: ". . . I am not strong enough to lead you. I have sought for you someone like ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, when Abū Bakr appointed him as his successor, but I found no one; and I sought for you the likes of the six men of the Council [appointed by ‘Umar ﷺ to choose his successor from

amongst themselves], but I found no one, therefore choose whoever you desire. . .”

He then instructed Ḍaḥḥāk ibn Qays to lead the people in prayer until a caliph emerged to lead them. It was not long afterwards that Mu‘āwiyah died, suffering from an illness which afflicted him. With his death, the caliphate passed from the Sufyānid family to the Marwānids.

Lesson Eighteen

THE MARWĀNIDS


4. MARWĀN IBN AL-ḤAKAM

Following the abdication of Mu‘āwiyah II, the position of ‘Abdullāh ibn az-Zubayr⁶⁹ was strengthened, such that he nearly acquired a comprehensive caliphate. Indeed, this might have been the case had Marwān ibn al-Ḥakam not laid claim to it. His claim was backed by supporters of the Banū Umayyah and he fought the supporters of Ibn az-Zubayr at Marj Rāhiṭ⁷⁰ and defeated them. He proceeded to occupy Syria and then gained possession of Egypt. However, death overtook him and he was unable to complete what he had hoped to achieve⁷¹.

5. ‘ABD AL-MALIK

He was succeeded by his son, ‘Abd al-Malik, who was resolute, alert and steadfastly determined, and who made it his main concern to destroy the power of Ibn az-Zubayr, to whom allegiance had been pledged as Caliph in the Ḥijāz, Iraq, and the intervening lands. He therefore went himself to fight Muṣ‘ab ibn az-Zubayr, the Amīr of Iraq under his brother, ‘Abdullāh. He defeated and killed him. Thus, Iraq and its people came under his control.

He then sent Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf ath-Thaqafī as his own Amir over the Ḥijāz, to fight ‘Abdullāh ibn az-Zubayr. The former advanced and besieged the latter in Makkah, bombarding the city with catapults. The siege continued until Ibn az-Zubayr emerged after

provisions had been exhausted. He fought in the face of death and was killed ⁷². With his death, all Muslim lands fell under the control of ‘Abd al-Malik ibn Marwān. This followed the long episodes of discord which had led ‘Abd al-Malik to accept a truce arrangement with the ruler of Byzantium, requiring the former to pay the latter an allowance. Had the Muslims not become embroiled in fighting each other, they would never have been reduced to such weakness.

During the reign of ‘Abd al-Malik, the borders of Muslim lands widened eastwards in Sindh and Turkistan.

Also during his era, Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf built the city of Wāsiṭ⁷³.

‘Abd al-Malik died in the middle of the month of Shawwāl, 86/705⁷⁴.

6. WALĪD I


‘Abd al-Malik was succeeded by his son, Walid ibn ‘Abd al-Malik. Hence, Muslim authority was united and their power was concentrated against their enemies. This peace gave rise to numerous foreign conquests and domestic reforms.


To the east, the lands of Bukhara and Samarkand were conquered at the hands of the great commander, Qutaybah ibn Muslim al-Bāhili.

Sindh was conquered by Muḥammad ibn al-Qāsim ibn Muḥammad athThaqaft.

To the north, many Byzantine fortresses were taken.

In addition, the amīr Mūsā ibn Naṣīr conquered Andalusia (Andalus)⁷⁵.

As for domestic reform, Walid ordered his Governor of Madinah, ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz, to reconstruct the Prophet’s  Mosque.

He extended it to two hundred square cubits and incorporated the rooms of the Prophet's  wives within the structure. The ruler of Byzantium helped in this reconstruction, contributing one thousand gold pieces, forty camels bearing pieces of mosaic and one hundred of his workers.

Walid ordered the improvement of roads and building of wells, and that lepers should be prevented from approaching people and provided for.

In short, Walid's time as Caliph was one of the best periods of Umayyad rule. Freed from civil strife and contemptible disunity, more people became involved in working for the benefit of the Ummah.

Walid died in the middle of the month of Jumādā'l-Ākhirah, 96/715⁷⁶.

7. SULAYMĀN

Walid was succeeded by his brother, Sulaymān ibn 'Abd al-Malik.

The beginning of his reign witnessed the killing of the great amīr, Qutaybah ibn Muslim, in the course of a dissent which he incited with the aim of deposing Sulaymān. This was due to the latter's perception that the Caliph was disregarding him in favour of his rival, Yazīd ibn al-Muhallab, with whom he intended to replace him. When the leaders of the army who were with Qutaybah learnt of his intention to depose the Caliph, they swiftly overcame and killed him.

As long as rulers prioritise their desires over the benefit of those in their charge, they will thereby create enmity between their leaders and amīrs. This is extremely harmful to themselves and their communities, if they would only consider it.

One action of Sulaymān's which deserves to be criticised is his anger towards the amir Mūsā ibn Naṣīr, conquerer of Andalusia, and his fining him an exorbitant sum which left him begging people for something in return for his great feats.

During his reign, Maslamah ibn 'Abd al-Malik⁷⁷ laid siege to Constantinople for the second time.

Sulaymān died in 99/718.

8. 'UMAR IBN 'ABD AL-'AZĪZ

Sulaymān was succeeded by the righteous 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz ibn Marwān. He was kind to his flock; hence, the Ummah remained calm and its people devoted themselves to their work and their religion.

His reign was distinguished by the work of collecting Prophetic ḥadīths, which had hitherto remained preserved in the breasts of those who had memorised them. The renowned ḥadīth scholar, Imām Muḥammad ibn Muslim ibn Shihāb az-Zuhrī al-Qurashī⁷⁸ was charged with this task and gathered what it was in his capacity to collect.

During his reign, the number of jurists (*fuqahā'*) and ḥadīth scholars (*muḥaddithūn*) increased. Indeed, had his reign endured, Muslims would have benefitted greatly; however, he died in the month of Rajab, 101/720.

9. YAZĪD II

Following the death of 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz, he was replaced as Caliph by Yazīd ibn 'Abd al-Malik. He did not love reform as his

predecessor had done, so he set about undoing everything which ‘Umar had achieved that did not suit his desires.

When Yazīd ibn al-Muhallab revolted against him at Basrah, the Caliph mobilised his armies against him under the command of Maslamah ibn ‘Abd al-Malik. The two sides clashed in a terrible battle which ended in the killing of Yazīd ibn al-Muhallab; but Yazīd ibn ‘Abd al-Malik showed no fear of Allāh, for he killed the relatives and children of Ibn al-Muhallab who had been captured.

During his reign, Jarrāḥ ibn ‘Abdullāh al-Ḥakamī conquered much of the lands of the Khazars. He was also Governor of Armenia.

At the end of the month of Sha‘bān, 105/724, Yazīd ibn ‘Abd al-Malik died and was succeeded by his brother, Hishām.

69 He invited the people to pledge allegiance to him as Caliph, which they did, in the month of Rabī‘ al-Awwal 64/683.

70 Marj Rāhiṭ is the first of the hills of Ḥawrān (Hauran) bordering the Arabian Peninsula, on the edge of the land of Banū Ghassān, in northern Jordan today.


71 Marwān ibn al-Ḥakam died ten months after setting out to fight Ibn az-Zubayr, on 3 Ramaḍān 65/685.

72 This took place in the month of Jumādā’l-Ākhirah, 73/692. After this date, the jurists (*fīqhāh*) accept the Caliphate of ‘Abd al-Malik. The Caliphate of Ibn az-Zubayr ﷺ lasted nine years and two and a half months. He was martyred at the age of seventy-three.


73 His achievements also include building the Dome of the Rock (*Masjid aṣ-Ṣakhrah*).

74 For a more detailed account, see: Dr. Diyā’ ad-Dīn ar-Rayyis, *‘Abd al-Malik ibn Marwān*.

75 See Lesson Four.

76 During the reign of Walīd, the state reached the peak of its conquests. The level of construction also greatly increased, one of its greatest vestiges—besides the expansion of the Prophet's  Mosque—being the Great Mosque of Damascus. (For a more detailed account, see: Dr. Ḥusnī Kharbūṭlī, Al-Walīd ibn ʿAbd al-Malik.)

77 Maslamah ibn ʿAbd al-Malik was an intellectually gifted amir, who was Governor of Iraq and Armenia and laid siege to Constantinople at the age of twenty-four. Dhahabī said: “He was fitter to be caliph than his brothers.” He died in 120/738.

78 He was Imām Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Muslim ibn ʿAbdullāh ibn Shihāb az-Zuhri, from Banū Zuhrah, from Kilāb, from Quraysh. He was the first to compile a written collection of ḥadīth, and one of the great memorisers of ḥadīth and jurists. He was a Follower (*Tābiʿī*) [i.e. of the generation after the Prophet's  Companions] from Madīnah. He died in 124/742.

Lesson Nineteen

10. HISHĀM

Hishām was amongst the most intelligent of the Umayyads. ‘Abdullāh Ibn ‘Alī al-‘Abbās said of him: “I collected the records of the Umayyads and none were more correct, nor more beneficial to the general populace, than the records of Hishām.”

Once, he noticed that one of his sons had not attended the Friday Prayer (*Ṣalāt al-Jumu‘ah*). He asked him, “What prevented you from attending the Prayer?” His son replied, “My mount died.” Hishām said, “And could you not walk?” Thereafter he denied his son a mount for a year.

Another instructive anecdote about him is that he once cursed a nobleman, who retorted, “Are you not ashamed to curse me when you are Allāh’s Deputy on Earth?” Hishām then felt ashamed and said, “Do the same to me.” The man said, “Then I would be insolent, like you.” He said, “Then take money from me in compensation.” “I will not,” said the man. “Then present it to Allāh.” “It is for Allāh and then for you,” said the man. Hishām bowed his head and said, “By Allāh, I will not repeat such behaviour.”

During his reign, the eastern armies were engaged in attacking the neighbouring Turks and were victorious. They killed their ruler, Khāqān, and drove them away in total panic.

Also during his reign, Zayd ibn ‘Alī led a revolt against him in Kufah, but was killed⁷⁹.

On the other hand, it was during this period that secret assemblies were organised calling for support for the ‘Abbāsids and

the removal of the Umayyad Dynasty.

The head of this propaganda campaign was Abū Muslim al-Khurāsānī and the leader which it called for was Ibrāhīm ibn Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī ibn ‘Abdullāh ibn al-‘Abbās.

Hishām died at the end of the month of Rabī‘ al-Ākhir, 125/743.

11. WALĪD II

Hishām was succeeded by his nephew, Walid ibn Yazīd ibn ‘Abd al-Malik.

Walid II has been accused of some of the pastimes which the religion of Islām deems unlawful, such as drinking alcohol, profligacy and shamelessness. Hence, the people did not consider him fit to be Caliph. They revolted against him and killed him in the month of Jumādā’l-Ākhirah, 126/744.

12. YAZĪD III

Walīd II was succeeded by his cousin, Yazīd ibn al-Walīd ibn ‘Abd al-Malik.⁸⁰ His reign lasted no longer than six months, for he died in the month of Dhū’l-Ḥijjāh, 126/744.

During his reign, there was unrest amongst the people of Khorasan, who began to show increasing tribal solidarity, expressed through loyalty to their various individual tribes.

This disunity presented a great opportunity to Abū Muslim, head of the ‘Abbāsīd propaganda mission, who began igniting the flames of enmity by inclining towards one tribe in order to weaken another. In this way, his position was strengthened, while that of the Umayyads was destabilised.

13. MARWĀN II

On the death of Yazīd, some men of authority wanted to appoint Ibrāhīm ibn al-Walīd ibn ‘Abd al-Malik⁸¹. However, Marwān ibn Muḥammad ibn Marwān, the Governor of Armenia, did not approve of this. He therefore came to Syria and fought to prevent him assuming the office of Caliph and won it for himself, without the consent of the Umayyads.

Thus, the ruling family was split. Sulaymān Ibn Hishām Ibn ‘Abd al-Malik, his brothers and clients all dissociated themselves from Marwān, who in turn was forced to wage war against Sulaymān and his supporters. The two sides met at Qunarīm, where they engaged in a decisive battle in which Sulaymān was defeated. Some thirty thousand of his supporters were killed.

All this, in addition to popular support in Khorasan for Abū Muslim al-Khurāsānī and Kufah’s acceptance of the ‘Abbāsīd mission, led Abū’l-‘Abbās ‘Abdullāh ibn Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī ibn ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abbās to emerge in Kufah, where allegiance was pledged to him as the Caliph of all Muslims.

Once the pledge of allegiance had been given, he dispatched an army under the command of his uncle, ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Alī, to finish off the remnants of Marwān’s force. The army advanced and met Marwān at the Zāb⁸²—one of the tributaries of the Tigris—where Marwān’s army were abominably routed. He continued to retreat, moving from town to town with the ‘Abbāsīd army in pursuit, until he came to the village of Būṣīr (in central Egypt)⁸³, where he met his demise.

With him, the Umayyad Dynasty came to an end, at the end of the month of Dhū’l-Hijjah, 132/750. They had ruled for approximately ninety years and eight months.

The dynasty was distinguished by the fact that it was purely Arab —no other race had strength or power within it.

During the Umayyad era, the borders of the Muslim Empire expanded eastwards, westwards and northwards, adding to its dominion the lands of Sindh and a large portion of Turkistan, stretching as far as the city of Kashgar on the border of China. To the north, the Umayyads succeeded in taking numerous Byzantine fortresses and strongholds, although their winter and summer forces (the soldiers whose job it was to protect the borders and attack enemies in the winter and summer respectively) were indefatigable. In addition, the Umayyads kept a strong fleet in the Mediterranean Sea, ensuring that the Byzantine Empire remained in awe of them and wary of their flank.

The Umayyad era saw people devoting themselves to religious knowledge, literature and languages. It was then that the first works on hadith and jurisprudence (*fiqh*) were written, since at that time jurisprudence was always incorporated into other books, rather than treated separately.

Scholars of the Arabic language and poets enjoyed particular favour with the dynasty.

One matter for which the Umayyad Caliphs deserve criticism is that they deemed the Ummah unworthy of participation in consultation (*shūrā*) regarding their affairs or offering their rulers advice.

Furthermore, many of its amīrs were tyrants, such as Ḥajjaj Ibn Yūsuf and others. For this reason, the name of the Umayyads was not exulted in the view of the general Muslim populace, despite their achievements in terms of expanding Muslim territories.

79 This occurred in 121/739. In 122/740, the Berbers revolted and captured Kairouan and Tanjier (Ṭanjah). The revolt was put down in 124/742 after fierce battles.

80 He was nicknamed: Yazīd the Reducer (*Nāqīṣ*), since he abolished the bonus given to soldiers and amīrs which had been increased by Walīd ibn Yazīd in order to win their support. It was said: “Ashajj and Nāqīṣ are the most just of the Umayyads” (Ashajj is ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz).

81 This Ibrāhīm is not counted amongst the Caliphs, since he did not gain full authority and due to his inability to control even his own supporters.

82 The Battle of the Zāb took place on 2 Jumādā’l-Ākhirah, 132/750. The River Zāb lies 125 km from Mosul (Mawṣil) along the Tigris.

83 Būṣīr is the name of four villages in Egypt. The one in which Marwān was killed is called: Būṣīr Qūraydis.

Lesson Twenty

ANDALUSIA (ANDALUS)

Andalusia is part of Europe, separated in the south from Africa by the Straits of Gibraltar (Jabal Ṭāriq) and in the north from France by the Pyrenees Mountains.

The Muslims conquered Andalusia during the caliphate of Walīd ibn ‘Abd al-Malik, when the Governor of North Africa was the amīr, Mūsā ibn Nuṣayr.

It occurred to Mūsā to cross the sea and take that great region, so he wrote to Walīd about it and they agreed that he should dispatch raiding parties so as to determine what was required. Hence, he sent a client of his named Ṭarīf at the head of four hundred men and one hundred horses in a fleet of four ships. He landed on an Andalusian island which has since borne his name and then attacked the port of Algeciras (Al-Jazīrah al-Khuḍrā’), gaining victory there and returning safely in 91/710.

When Mūsā saw this, he selected a client of his who was one of his leading soldiers, Ṭāriq ibn Ziyād, and sent him at the head of a seven-thousand-strong force, most of whom were Berbers. They crossed the sea, heading for that mountain which would thereafter be known by the name of Ṭāriq. From the mountain they descended into the desert and conquered Algaciras.

When news of Ṭāriq’s feat reached the ruler of Andalusia, Roderic, he mustered his armies. At the same time, Mūsā supported Ṭāriq with a further five thousand men, so that those with him totalled twelve thousand, yet Roderic’s force numbered around one hundred thousand. However, there was a vast difference between the hearts of

those gathered to fight to ensure that the Word of Allāh be exalted, and the disunited hearts which did not fight out of love for their king but out of compulsion. Woe betide those rulers and amīrs who do not instil love in their flock through justice and avoidance of base matters; for in times of need, they find no one from amongst that flock to support them. Such was the case with Roderic. His army were defeated in the face of their enemies' strength and he himself was weakened and defeated, drowning in the Guadalete River (Nahar Lakah)—at the Battle of Medina-Sidonia. This was the deciding point in this war, the greatest of wars fought by the Muslims.

When Mūsā ibn Nuṣayr learnt of the victory, he wrote to Ṭāriq, instructing him to wait until he came to him. He set out from Kairouan (Qayrawān) in 92/711 with a great military force and did not stop until he had crossed the sea to Andalusia and met Ṭāriq. Then Mūsā completed the conquest, taking Barcelona in the east, Narbonne inland and Cadiz in the west. Having subdued its provinces, he decided to return to the east via Constantinople, plunging into the territories of the European Christian nations, fighting his way to the territory of the Caliphate. On the other hand, he wanted to avoid insurmountable difficulties, all of which—in the author's opinion—amounted to a fanciful idea to which Mūsā had not given full consideration. Hence, Walīd ibn 'Abd al-Malik succeeded in convincing him to do otherwise.

Having completed the conquest of these lands, Mūsā granted protection to their peoples and chose Cordoba (Qurṭubah) as their capital, installing his son, 'Abd al-'Azīz, there as his deputy. He himself returned to meet Walīd, bringing with him gifts and treasure. However, Walīd died before Mūsā reached him; instead, his arrival coincided with the appointment of Sulaymān ibn 'Abd al-Malik as Caliph. The new Caliph treated Mūsā with hostility, disregarding him

from favour despite his role in the conquest. In addition, the people of Andalusia revolted against his son, ‘Abd al-‘Azīz, and killed him.

After the conquest of Andalusia, it became an Umayyad Governorate, governed by one of their amīrs. Sometimes the caliph himself would preside over it and at other times one of his governors in Kairouan would administer it.

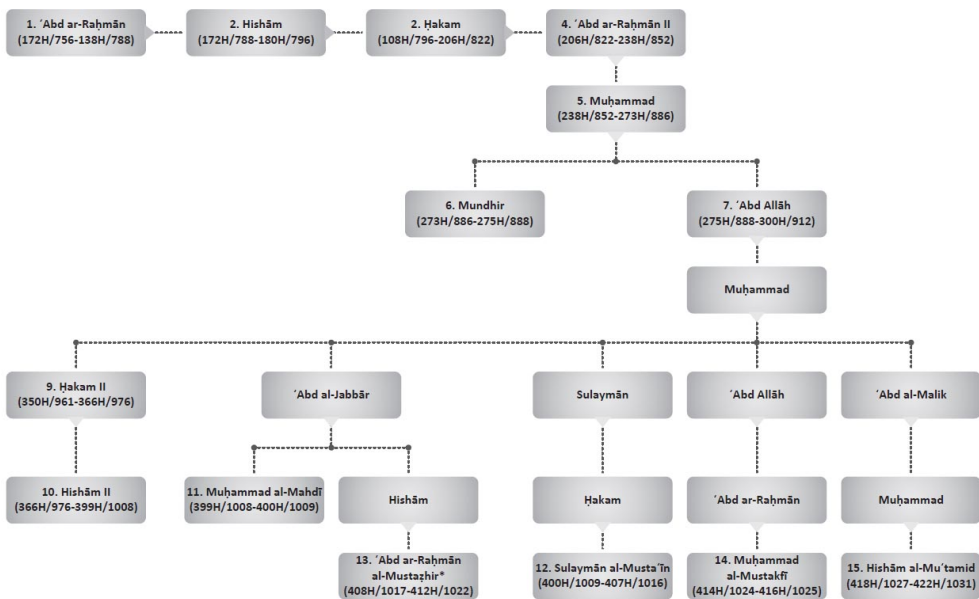
During this period, its governors were involved in completing the conquest of those areas of Andalusia which had not been secured initially. They took Barcelona in the east and the strongholds and plains of Castile inland. Those remaining of the original inhabitants who did not accept Muslim rule sought refuge in the mountains of Castile and Narbonne via mountain passes. Here, they fortified themselves and were disregarded by the Muslims due to their small numbers.

This pattern persisted for forty-six years, with the Muslims engaged in continuous wars to complete the conquest of Andalusia. It even occurred to one Muslim amīr, ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān al-Ghāfiqī, to cross the border with France. However, he was outnumbered by his enemies and his force was overcome during the month of Ramaḍān, 114/732, at a spot known as the Palace of the Martyrs (Balāṭ ash-Shuhadā’).

When Umayyad power weakened in the east, such that they were unable to preserve the territory which they ruled near at hand, let alone the remote parts of the empire, they abandoned government of Andalusia and it deteriorated into chaos. In addition, the people of Andalusia suffered from that terrible fault which had previously ruined the situation in Khorasan; namely, tribalism. Some of them were Arabs from Muḍar, while others were from Yemen, and each group sought preferential treatment, leadership and power for themselves.

Finally, they agreed to alternate leadership between them, with the Muḍarīs governing for a year, followed by the Yemenis. The Muḍarīs chose as their leader Yūsuf ibn ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān al-Fihri. When he had governed for one year, the Yemenis approached him, seeking their rights as per the agreement. However, Yūsuf had them spend the night in one of the Cordoban villages; then he killed a great number of them and seized control of Andalusia.

At the same time, the Umayyad Dynasty had fallen from power in the east and the ‘Abbāsīd Dynasty was established. The ‘Abbāsīds treated all remaining Umayyads extremely harshly, killing all those who had the misfortune to fall into their hands, and leading those who escaped to flee to outlying Muslim territories. One of those who fled was ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān ibn Mu‘āwiyah ibn Hishām ibn ‘Abd al-Malik ibn Marwān, who decided to travel to Andalusia and establish a kingdom there. It is indicative of his ambition and determination that he set off alone and exiled, bereft of possessions other than his slave. Still, something within him told him to head for such a land and to re-establish there a dynasty whose time was past. Great souls are only strengthened and fortified by painful events and they know not despair.



The Umayyad Caliphs of Andalusia

*There are differences of opinion regarding the exact sequence of succession during this period. These dates reflect the author's opinion.

Lesson Twenty-One

THE Umayyad RULERS OF ANDALUSIA

The aforementioned conflict between the Muḍarls and the Yemenis was fortunate for ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān, who opposed the former on the basis of their treachery, while the latter supported him as a consequence of having been deceived. This took place in the year 138/756 and there followed a series of wars between ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān and Yūsuf al-Fihri, in which the former was victorious and won dominion over Andalusia.

Fifteen men from the Umayyad family ruled Andalusia, twelve before the emergence of the ‘Alawī Dynasty and three thereafter.

The dynasty came to an end in 420/1029 with the death of their final representative, Hishām ibn Muḥammad, whose title was Mu‘tamid ‘alā’llāh.⁸⁴

1. ‘ABD AR-RAḤMĀN I

He was given the title: ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān the Incomer (Dākhil), having established the Umayyad Dynasty in Andalusia and renewed their glory after it had been effaced. He was also called: ‘Amīr’ and this title was maintained by those who succeeded him, until ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān III—whose title was the Defender (Nāṣir)—became known as Commander of the Faithful (Amīr al-Mu‘minīn).

‘Abd ar-Raḥmān began by organising the lands which had been neglected in terms of any systematic rule. He kept records, allocated spending and launched initiatives, mobilised forces and displayed to neighbouring and other rulers an appearance of power and superior

reason, to the extent that the great ‘Abbāsīd Caliph, Abū Ja‘far al-Manṣūr, held him in awe and admiration. ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān intended to re-establish Umayyad rule in the east. However, there existed severe obstacles to this which he failed to overcome before his death. It was he who set in motion the market of Cordoba and built its Palace and Great Mosque.

He died in the year 172/788.

2. HISHĀM

Hishām I assumed power after his father, by whom he was appointed having been Governor of Merida. Thus, his father had prepared him for rule by making him a governor in his youth. In a manner similar to that of ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz, he would send those whom he trusted to the villages to question the people about the dealings of his agents and report the truth to him. If an injustice which one of them had committed came to his attention, he would dismiss him without discrimination and refrain from employing him again.

He it was who reconstructed the Bridge of Cordoba and then said to one of his ministers: “What say the people of Cordoba?” The minister replied, “They say that the Amīr only rebuilt it so that his hunt can pass over it.” At that, Hishām took it upon himself never to use it. From then on, he never did so, remaining true to his vow.

We can best benefit from this anecdote by noting the freedom of society, the honesty of the minister and the sincerity of the amir. It is through such values that nations enjoy might and leadership.

May Allāh have mercy upon Imām Mālik for his saying when Hishām was described to him: “We ask Allāh Most High to adorn our time with such a leader.”

In addition to these characteristics, he did not neglect the jihād against the enemy which would earn his Ummah strength and awe in the eyes of its neighbours.

He died in 180/796.

3. ḤAKAM IBN HISHĀM

From the outset of his reign, Ḥakam ibn Hishām was preoccupied with its pleasures. Hence, the pious of Cordoba, such as Yaḥyā ibn Yaḥyā al-Laythī—a companion of Imām Mālik and one of the narrators of the *Muwattaʿ* from him—and other people of knowledge united and rebelled against him. Although they deposed him, he waged war on them and succeeded in dispersing them. Moreover, he learnt from this lesson and was thereafter the strongest, boldest and bravest of the Umayyads of Andalusia. As a result, he was compared to the ‘Abbāsīd Caliph, Abū Jaʿfar al-Manṣūr, for the strength of his rule, the stability of his state and his oppression of his enemies.

Once, the jurist Ziyād ibn ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān was in his presence when Ḥakam became angry with one of his servants and ordered that his hand be cut off. Ziyād said to him, “May Allāh correct the Amīr; for Mālik ibn Anas narrated to me this ḥadīth which he attributed to the Prophet ﷺ: ‘that anyone who suppresses anger which it is in his power to act upon, Allāh Most High will fill him with security and faith on the Day of Resurrection.’” Ḥakam then ordered that the servant should be left alone and pardoned, saying, “By Allāh, did Mālik narrate that to you?” Ziyād replied, “By Allāh, Mālik narrated it to me.”

Also during his reign there was a famine in Andalusia, during which he took measures to increase levels of equality for the needy.

Ḥakam died in 206/822. Perhaps his piety in the later stages of his reign makes amends for his wrongdoing at the outset, so that history judges him to have done enough—neither to have gained nor lost.

4. ʿABD AR-RAḤMĀN II

ʿAbd ar-Raḥmān II was appointed by his father as his successor. He was a scholar of Shariʿah and of philosophy and his reign was a period of peace and tranquillity. He amassed great wealth and adopted the use of palaces and parks to which he redirected water from the mountains, also creating a reservoir of surplus water from which people could drink. He had bridges constructed and during his reign mosques were built in the villages of Andalusia. In addition, he added two colonnades to the Great Mosque of Cordoba. He put the kingdom's records in order and withdrew from the general populace.

During his reign he engaged in correspondence with the Byzantine Emperor, Theophilos. In 225/840, the latter sent him a gift, seeking correspondence with him and desiring that his descendents would rule in the east, on account of the trouble caused to him by the ʿAbbāsīd Caliph, Ma'mūn, and his brother, Mu'taṣim. ʿAbd ar-Raḥmān requited his gift and sent him Yaḥyā al-Ghazāl⁸⁵, a great statesman, who consolidated their correspondence.

Consider how the enemy benefits in this way from division amongst rivals, so that they become preoccupied with each other and he gains ultimately.

This Amīr had a passion for music, over which he preferred no other enjoyment, to the extent that when the famous singer, Ziryāb⁸⁶, arrived from Iraq, he went out to welcome him himself. It was Ziryāb who introduced the art of music to Andalusia.

‘Abd ar-Raḥmān II died in 238/852.

5. MUḤAMMAD IBN ‘ABD AR-RAḤMĀN

He was appointed by his father as his successor. His reign was marked by opposition from the people of Toledo, who were his own soldiers. They ill-advisedly sought assistance from their enemies, the King of Galicia and the King of the Basque people, providing a desirable entry point into Muslim territory for these two rulers, who were quick to offer their support to the Toledans. However, Muḥammad, himself confronted and battled with them, with the result that twenty thousand Toledans and their supporters were killed.

Woe betides anyone who seeks help from his enemies, who hope to see him humbled and disgraced. They will only help him in order to soon get the better of him. Toledo proved to be the first of the lands of Andalusia to fall to those enemies who were prevailed upon for assistance.

Muḥammad died in 273/886.

6. MUNDHIR IBN MUḤAMMAD

His reign was short and hence he did not accomplish anything great.

7. ‘ABDULLĀH

He assumed power after his brother, Mundhir.

During his reign, the regions of Andalusia were shaken by revolutionaries and separatists. As a consequence, his finances were weakened, since he was forced to spend much on his armed forces in order to rectify the situation in the governorates.

He died in 300/912.

84 See figure: The Umayyad Caliphs of Andalusia.

85 Yaḥyā ibn al-Ḥakam al-Bakrī al-Jayyānī, known as Ghazāl, a published poet whose verse was distinguished by humour and wit. He had significant power and was close to the amīrs of Andalusia. He is the author of a collection of poetry. He died in 250 /864 (*Ziriklī, Al-Aʿlām*ʿ, 8:143).

86 Ziryāb was ʿAlī Ibn Nāfiʿ, a client (*mawlā*) of the ʿAbbāsīd Caliph, Mahdī, and the outstanding musician of his time. It was he who invented the five-stringed lute (increasing the number of strings from four). He was also a published poet with a beautiful voice who sang in his youth for Hārūn ar-Rashīd. He died in around 243/857 (*Ziriklī, Al-Aʿlām*ʿ, p. 28).

Lesson Twenty-Two

8. COMMANDER OF THE FAITHFUL (AMĪR AL-MU'MINĪN) 'ABD AR-RAḤMĀN AN-NĀṢIR

He was appointed by his grandfather, 'Abdullāh, as his successor and was the first to be called Commander of the Faithful in Andalusia.

He found Andalusia ablaze with separatist fires. Once he had extinguished these fires and dismissed the rebels, the territory submitted to his control.

He often participated personally in military campaigns, until his army was defeated in a battle against Ramiro II, King of Galicia. This was the result of a betrayal by one of Nāṣir's opponents, named Umayyah ibn Ishāq, who revealed Muslim weaknesses to Ramiro.

Following this battle, 'Abd ar-Raḥmān refrained from participating personally in military campaigns, preferring to repel attacks through the command of his military leaders, who succeeded in subduing the small neighbouring kingdoms. Having displayed the extent of his resolve and grip on power, the Kings of Europe extended their hands in compliance from beyond the mountain passes and sent him their emissaries and gifts from Rome and Constantinople in token of truce and peace. Neighbouring rulers of territories within Andalusia, from Castella, Pamplon and their inland border towns, came to his door. They kissed his hand, sought his pleasure, took away his rewards and boarded his ships.

When the envoys of the Byzantine Emperor arrived, Nāṣir welcomed them with great honour, such that they were awe-struck by what they saw of the Caliphate's grandeur and power.

The first line of the letter which the Emperor sent may be translated: “[From] Constantine and Romanine, believers in the Messiah, the two great Kings of Byzantium.”

The next line said: “[To] the great and deservedly exalted, the noble born, Caliph ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān, the Ruler of the Arabs of Andalusia, may God preserve him.”

Despite his power and the grandeur of his rule, Nāṣir treated religious scholars (*‘ulama’*) with a degree of respect which inspired in them an appreciation of the loftiness of the task which they had assigned themselves: that of resurrecting dead souls by spreading the light of knowledge. Once they appreciated this, they expended every effort to achieve this and the Ummah progressed.

Such was the situation under Nāṣir. Scholars increased in number and strength. As they did so, so did the number of educated and cultured people, who recognised the value of refinement and strived along the path to achieving it.

It was fortunate for Andalusia at that time that the reign of Nāṣir was lengthy. He assumed power in 300/912 and died in 350/961. This notwithstanding, when he counted his days of happiness they numbered fourteen. Such is the state of rulers whose concern for the welfare of their community diverts them from personal desires and pleasures. They will be seen to find happiness in the happiness of the community and pleasure in their pleasure, regardless of the exertion and hardship which they suffer as a result.

9. AL-ḤAKAM AL-MUSTANṢIR

Ḥakam II was appointed by his father as his successor. At the beginning of his reign the Galicians had ambitions to take advantage of weaknesses in the wake of Nāṣir’s death. He therefore showed

them a display of strength, making inroads into their territory with his forces. On seeing this, they hastened to contract a peace treaty with him, sending a delegation of their amīrs. Ḥakam welcomed their delegation and made his acceptance of the treaty conditional upon the destruction of those enemy strongholds which were in the vicinity of Muslim outposts. None of the neighbouring amīrs delayed in arriving to see him.

In addition, Ḥakam was passionate about learning, honoured people of knowledge and collected all kinds of books to an extent that was unprecedented amongst his predecessors.

His librarian stated that the catalogues in which the titles of his books were listed numbered forty-four. He also established for the sake of knowledge and its scholars a successful book market which attracted products from all regions.

He had a good reputation, was generous to all who approached him and was extremely knowledgeable. He strictly prohibited alcohol from his kingdom.

He died, may Allāh have mercy on him, in Cordoba in 366/976.

10. HISHĀM II (MU'AYYAD)

He was appointed as Caliph after his father, Ḥakam II, at the age of nine, with the minister Ibn Abi 'Amir acting as regent. Ibn Abi 'Amir inclined towards monopolising the affairs of state but saw that other powerful figures were in competition with him. He therefore plotted against them so that they killed one another, leaving him in complete control of the Caliph. He prohibited ministers from visiting Ḥakam often; on the rare occasions that they did so they would merely greet him and leave. Such are tyrants: they like to keep ideas

locked in people's heads, not permitting anyone to speak the truth, for fear that the illusion of power will be destroyed by it.

To consolidate his position, Ibn Abī 'Āmir sent for Berbers from Northwest Africa (Maghrib). He brought a large number of them to Andalusia, organised them into an army and made them his clients. Thus, he took complete control of the state and monopoly of power. He built for himself a city, named *Zāhirah*, to which he transferred the state treasury and arms. He sat on a king's throne and ordered that the royal greeting be resurrected and that he himself should be referred to as Chamberlain (*Hājib*) *Manṣūr*. He also ordered that supplication (*du'ā'*) should be performed for him after supplication for the Caliph.

These ceremonial vestiges were all that was left to Hishām II of the caliphate, apart from having his name written on coinage. *Manṣūr*, on the other hand, undertook numerous military campaigns, in which his standard was never lowered. As his power increased, that of the Caliph was weakened relatively. He continued to grow in strength until he died in 494/1100. His legacy includes the construction of a bridge over the great [Guadalquivir] River in Cordoba, on which he spent 140 000 dinars, the benefit from which was immense. He built another bridge in Ecija over the River Genii, which involved expending great efforts but made traversing the roadless terrain and the difficult mountain paths much easier.

When al-*Manṣūr* died, his son, 'Abd al-Malik al-Muẓaffar Abū Marwān, took over the affairs of the Caliph, Mu'ayyad, and proceeded in the same vein as his father in terms of politics and military campaigns. He in turn was succeeded by his brother, 'Abd ar-Raḥmān, who adopted the title: *Nāṣir li-Dīni'llāh*. He hoped for the caliphate itself to devolve to him and persuaded Hishām to designate him as his heir. This, however, increased the people's

anger towards him, causing them to revolt against him in his absence during one of his military campaigns. They deposed Hishām al-Mu’ayyad and appointed instead Muḥammad ibn Hishām ibn ‘Abd al-Jabbār ibn an-Nāṣir, giving him the title: Mahdī.

Lesson Twenty-Three

11. MUḤAMMAD AL-MAHDĪ

The people of Andalusia swore allegiance to Mahdī after Hishām al-Mu’ayyad was deposed. At his command, the Chamberlain ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān was killed on returning from his military campaign.

The appointment of Mahdī incited further tribal anger, with Mahdī and the people of Andalusia taking vengeance upon the Berbers who had been recruited as soldiers by the Chamberlain Manṣūr, by revealing their hatred and discontent towards them. The Berbers lost their standing and reacted by plotting to rebel against Mahdī and pledge allegiance to Hishām ibn Sulaymān ibn an-Nāṣir. When the people became aware of this, Hishām was taken and killed, while the Berbers were expelled from Cordoba. They were then joined by Sulaymān ibn al-Ḥakam, with whom they agreed to depose Mahdī and to pledge him their allegiance, giving him the title: Musta‘m bi’llāh.

They ill-advisedly sought help from the King of Castile, Alfonso v, who aided them with substantial military support and accompanied them to Cordoba. There they fought Mahdī, killing some twenty thousand of his troops. Thus, Musta‘in took possession of Cordoba and Alfonso returned to his seat of power.

Thereafter, however, Mahdī went to Alfonso seeking help and he came to his aid. Such is all that may be hoped from alliances between dullards who desire nothing but their own interests.

Mahdī and Alfonso advanced to Cordoba and waged war against Musta‘in until Mahdī had regained control of the city. Musta‘in and

the Berbers left, wreaking havoc in the land, with Maḥdī and Alfonso in pursuit. Then Must Mustaʿin attacked in turn, fighting them fiercely until he had overcome them. Maḥdī then returned to Cordoba, where he brought out [the deposed Caliph] Hishām al-Muʿayyad, pledged allegiance to him and assumed the role of his Chamberlain. However, the people of Cordoba, fearing a Berber attack on the city, killed Maḥdī and maintained Hishām al-Muʿayyad as Caliph. Yet this was of no avail, since Mustaʿin continued to lay siege to the city until he had captured and entered it, portraying himself as victor. In fact, he and those with him were destroying their own houses by their own hands and by the hands of the disbelievers.

All this contributed to the weakening of the state and its prestige, with the result that governors took independent control of their governorates, so that each governorate became effectively a separate dominion.

As for Cordoba, the leader of the great cities, it became witness to successive atrocities; for the Umayyads had grown weak and been humbled.

THE END OF THE Umayyad DYNASTY IN ANDALUSIA

At the same time in Ceuta [in Northwest Africa] there was an ʿAlawid (ʿAlawī) ruler by the name of ʿAlī ibn Ḥammūd an-Nāṣir. On realising the weakness of the Umayyads, he crossed the sea to Andalusia and advanced to Cordoba. The people of Cordoba pledged allegiance to him on the basis that they would remain loyal to Hishām if his affair became clear. ʿAlī ibn Ḥammūd ruled on that basis for a period, until, when no trace was found of Hishām, he called upon the people to pledge allegiance to him [as Caliph]. This

they did, giving him the title: Mutawakkil ‘alā’llāh. He was the first of the ‘Alawid Dynasty to rule Andalusia. However, the dynasty may be likened to a fleeting dream, since it was not long before it had gone without trace, taking with it the Umayyad Dynasty also. Thus, Andalusia was left without organised caliphal rule; the land became divided and was ruled by what history terms: the Petty Kings.

THE PETTY KINGS

Seville was ruled by the ‘Abbādid Dynasty (Banū ‘Abbād), Badajoz by the Aftasid Dynasty (Banū’l-Aftas), founded by ‘Abdullāh ibn Muḥammad al-Aftas. Toledo was ruled by the dynasty founded by Ismā‘īl ibn Dhī’n-Nūn, Zaragoza by the dynasty of Banū Hūd, Tortosa by Labīb al-‘Āmirī and Valencia by Maṣṣūr al-Maghāfirī.

This was in addition to other powerful men and governors who had taken independent control of the domains in their charge.

This division sustained the hopes of the kings of Spain of retaking these lands, the value of which had risen and whose inhabitants had enjoyed an improved standard of living during the period of the Arab Caliphate. It was a case of: when hands remain firm, no amount of force can loosen their grip, but when they weaken, it becomes easy for the enemy to subdue them.

Toledo was the first city to be recaptured, at the hands of Alfonso VI, King of Castile, from its ruler, Qādir bi’llāh ibn al-Ma’mūn Ibn Yaḥyā, following a seven-year siege.

Thereafter, the Spanish kings began retaking the fortresses which protected the Petty Kingdoms, after which they were able to deal with their leaders as they wished.

THE MULATHTHAMŪN DYNASTY [OR ALMORAVIDS (MURĀBIṬŪN)]

When Mu‘tamad ibn ‘Abbād saw this situation, he sent to the Amīr of the Muslims in Northwest Africa and head of the Mulaththamūn, Yūsuf ibn Tāshfīn, seeking his aid, support and help. He then went to him himself and Yūsuf told him, “Return to your land and prepare yourselves; I am right behind you.”

Yūsuf then readied his squadrons, mustered his troops and crossed the sea to Andalusia in the year 479/1086, where his forces joined those of Ibn ‘Abbād. Alfonso VI advanced to meet them with his army and there took place between them a fierce battle which history refers to as the Battle of Zallāqah, in which Alfonso and his army suffered a humiliating defeat.

With victory his, Yūsuf judged that the best solution for Andalusia was for him to capture all its territories from the hands of their rulers, in light of the division that existed between them.

Hence, he took Cordoba and Seville from Ibn ‘Abbād, whom he expelled to Northwest Africa and had imprisoned in Aghmāt, where he eventually died.

Once Yūsuf had also taken Granada and other cities, matters progressed in his favour and the rule of the Petty Kings came to an end.

Thereafter, Andalusia became a region under the control of the Mulaththamūn in North Africa, whose base was at Marrakech (Murākash), the city built by Yūsuf ibn Tāshfīn to be his capital.

Yūsuf was a resolute general and administrated according to the interests of his dominion. He gave precedence to the learned men of religion and often consulted them on matters. He died in 500/1106.

The Mulaththamūn were ruled, after Yūsuf, by his brother, ‘Alī, during whose reign the Europeans captured Zaragoza and many Muslim strongholds. He died in 539/1144.

Lesson Twenty-Four

THE ALMOHAD DYNASTY (MUWAḤḤIDŪN)

After ‘Alī ibn Tāshfīn, none of his successors was capable of defending a territory with such far-flung borders as Andalusia. However, another dynasty arose in opposition to the Mulaththamūn which was still in its youth. This was the Almohad Dynasty (Muwaḥḥidūn), founded by Mahdī ‘Abdullāh ibn Tūmart. He was aided by ‘Abd al-Mu’min ibn ‘Alī, who succeeded in conquering Marrakech and all territories ruled by the Mulaththamūn. He was first sworn allegiance to as Caliph in 524/1130.

Having extended his power over Northwest Africa, he dispatched his army, transported by fleets, to conquer Andalusia from the remaining Mulaththamūn. He took complete possession of it in 545/1150. In addition, the Almohads succeeded in retaking many of the strongholds which had been captured by the Europeans and defeated Alfonso, King of Toledo. Had ‘Abd al-Mu’min lived longer, he would also have retaken Toledo; however, he met his end in 558/1163.

His legacy includes building the city of Gibraltar, which is now ruled by the English. He also kept a fleet of some 400 ships.

‘Abd al-Mu’min was succeeded by his son, Muḥammad. His rule was terminated, however, as he possessed characteristics which made him unfit to govern; namely, deficient judgement, inconstancy, cowardice and consumption of alcohol. He was therefore ousted by the community after forty-five days of rule.

His brother, Yūsuf ibn ‘Abd al-Mu’min, ruled after him. Once allegiance had been sworn to him, he dispatched his armies to Andalusia to rescue several cities which were surrounded by the Spanish. Having achieved not only this but further conquests, Yūsuf made the crossing to Andalusia himself in 561/1166 and assumed control of East Andalusia from the sons of Muḥammad ibn Mardaniṣh.

On his return to Seville, he built a great mosque there. Afterwards, he returned to Africa.

He crossed over to Andalusia a second time when news reached him that Alfonso was descending upon the city of Cordoba. He therefore travelled north by sea, intending to lay siege to Santarem. One night during the siege, however, while his soldiers were elsewhere, those who were besieged emerged and gave battle. He was seriously wounded and died on the journey back to Marrakech in 580/1184.

Yūsuf ibn ‘Abd al-Mu’min had some outstanding qualities which place him amongst the ranks of great rulers. He was a religious scholar and jurist and had memorised a large number of ḥadīths. He was inclined towards wisdom and philosophy, with regard to which it is sufficient to say that one of his companions was the renowned Muslim philosopher, Ibn Rushd, whose great works the Europeans referred to and learnt from.

After Yūsuf’s death, allegiance was sworn to his son, Abū Yūsuf Ya‘qūb, who was titled: Maṣṣūr.

During his reign, the wars of the Crusades raged between Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn Yūsuf al-Ayyūbī and the Europeans in Syria and Egypt. Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn had the advantage over his opponents in terms of strength on dry land; his fleet, on the other hand, was not capable of resisting

that of the Europeans. He therefore sent to Ya‘qūb al-Manṣūr, seeking aid through the support of his fleet. Unfortunately, he did not address the latter by his title of Commander of the Faithful, as a consequence of which Manṣūr’s pride got the better of him and he sent no aid to Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn. This is the utmost example of narrow-mindedness and poor reasoning.

Manṣūr had enemies in Africa who feared to let him rest and so he was distracted from Andalusia for a time. This enabled the Spanish and Portuguese to grow in strength and widen their borders, to the downfall of the Muslims.

When Ya‘qūb al-Manṣūr became aware of this, he made the crossing to Andalusia in 591/1195 with an enormous army. News of his advance reached Alfonso IX, King of Castile, who mustered a large force and advanced towards Manṣūr. They met at a place called Arāk, where the battle ended in a shocking defeat for the Europeans. It was one of the greatest battles which took place between the Muslims and the Europeans in Andalusia.

Thereafter, Manṣūr proceeded to conquer a number of strongholds in the vicinity of Toledo, such as Calatrava la Vieja (Qal‘at Rabbāḥ), Guadalajara (Wādi’l-Ḥijārah) and Madrid.

In addition to his military exploits, Manṣūr erected many magnificent buildings in Andalusia and North Africa, such as mosques, schools, asylums, fortresses, minarets and bridges. Had it not been for his withholding support from Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn, he would be counted amongst the great Muslim rulers.

In 595/1198, he withdrew from the pomp of kingship and appointed his son, Muḥammad an-Nāṣir li-Dīni’llāh as his successor.

During his reign, the kings of Andalusia united in attacking Muslim territory. In this, they received substantial European support,

since the Pope in Rome, Pope Innocent III, had called for a war against the Muslims, after the King of Castille had sought his aid. Hence, Nāṣir travelled across to Andalusia to meet them with an army such as no king had mustered previously. However, it was an army composed of a mismatch of various races.

The two armies met at a place called the Fortress of Aguila (Ḥiṣn al-ʿUqāb), north of Jaen. The battle ended in the defeat of Nāṣir and his army of Andalusians and Berbers. The date was 15 Ṣafar 609/1212. The defeat marked the end of Muslim power in Andalusia.

On his return to North Africa, Nāṣir arranged for allegiance to be sworn to his son, Yūsuf, whose title was: Muntaṣir. He then secluded himself in his palace until he died in 610/1213.

During the reign of Muntaṣir, Almohad rule faltered and their dynasty reached the verge of decrepitude. Alfonso IX, King of the Spanish, captured the Muslim strongholds and defeated the Andalusian garrison.

With Almohad power grown weak, the last Muslim dynasty of Andalusia arose there: Banū'l-Aḥmar [or the Naṣrids (Banū Naṣr)].

THE BANŪ'L-AḤMAR DYNASTY

The head of Banū'l-Aḥmar was Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf ibn Naṣr who, in 629/1231, staged a revolt against the defeated Ibn Hūd in Eastern Andalusia. There followed serious disputes between these two.

While they were at odds, their mutual enemies preceded to capture city after city, taking Cordoba in 633/1235 and Seville in 646/1248, following a two-year siege. The Spanish were helped in this siege by Ibn al-Aḥmar [i.e. Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf ibn Naṣr], who hoped that they would help him in return against his rival. The

enemy then captured Toledo, Silves and Talavera in 659/1261 and Murcia in 665/1266. They preceded to capture city after city in this way until the Muslims sought refuge in the coastal strip between Ronda in the west and Vera in the east. Thus, the Muslims were left with nothing except Sayf al-Baḥr, which was no bigger than a waystation.

This was the kingdom of Ibn al-Aḥmar, the capital of which was Granada. It was ruled by his descendants, who contested amongst themselves, until they were eventually awakened from their heedlessness and realised the strength of their enemies. They then sought help from the North African Marinid Kings (Banū'l-Marīn), heirs of the Almohad Dynasty, with whom they found some support. However, if a body is not prepared to live, the doctor's arts will be of no benefit to him, but will only result in a temporary relief from the pain of illness. This was the state of Banū'l-Aḥmar, who had harmed and weakened the Muslims. The Spaninsh captured Malaga from them in 892/1487 and then Guadix.

Then the Spanish King, Fernando the Catholic, made an offer to the ruler of Granada of pledging obedience to him in exchange for great personal wealth and the freedom to reside wherever he chose in Andalusia. He consulted his subjects, who refused to accept this (consultation took place only after the region had been devastated). Then the enemy advanced and laid siege to Granada in 896/1492. They destroyed crops, cut down trees and demolished villages. After seven months of siege, conditions became severe for inhabitants of the cities, who inclined towards reconciliation. Hence, they drew up conditions with their enemies, numbering sixty-seven, the most important of which were:

- Security for the young and old, in terms of their lives, their families and their wealth.
- People must retain their positions, their homes and their properties.
- Muslim Law must be upheld without change and no Muslim is to be judged under any other law.
- Mosques must remain intact, as well as religious endowments (*awqāf*).
- Christians must not enter Muslim houses or violate their property illegally.
- Christians or Jews may not take Muslims as slaves or clients.
- Any captives taken in Granada are to be freed to return to their former positions. Furthermore, any Muslim captive who escapes to Granada is free from his master and from anyone else, and his ransom is to be paid to his master by the Sultan (Sulṭān). Any who seek permission to cross to the mainland will not be prevented from doing so. They will cross at a specified period in the Sultan's ships, for which they will only be obliged to pay rent. After this period, they will hand over a tenth of their wealth in addition to the rent.
- No individual is to be held responsible for the crime of another.
- No Muslim convert is to be forced to revert to Christianity. Neither is anyone to be punished for killing a Christian in time of war.
- Muslims must not be required to receive Christian soldiers as guests.
- Neither should Muslims be sent to one of the [non-Muslim] areas. Nor should they pay more than the normal rate of tax or be subject to any form of oppression or new taxes.

- No *mu'adhdhin*, worshipper or person engaged in fasting may be prevented from carrying out his religious affairs.
- The ruler of Rome must agree to all of these conditions and sign by hand.

Thus ended Muslim rule in Andalusia. The Muslims became subjects of the ruler of Castile and the Sultan of Granada, Abū 'Abdullāh, abdicated.

The Spanish continued to observe these conditions for a short period, until they were firmly established and knew that no one would come to the aid of the Muslims. Then they abandoned the conditions and treated those Muslims who remained in Andalusia to numerous forms of persecution, in particular after the formation of the court known as the Tribunal of the Holy Office, or the Inquisition. It employed treatments so cruel and inhumane that they cannot be described in writing. These tribunals were formed by order of the Popes, who were the successors of Christ and preservers of his religion.

When the Muslims saw the horror that awaited them, they began escaping to Northwest Africa, until not a single Muslim remained and there were no monotheists in Andalusia. Yet the Earth belongs to Allāh and He makes heir to it those of His slaves whom He wills.

All of this is the natural result of the state of the Muslim leaders in the last years of their rule, their mutual hatred and aversion.

Lesson Twenty-Five

A LESSON FROM THE HISTORY OF ANDALUSIA

The reader will have seen the manner in which the Muslim State disappeared from Andalusia, having endured there for centuries, during which time the kings of Europe competed to gain its favour. He or she will also have seen how Andalusia changed from a Muslim land to a Christian one, when religion had previously been in fine form there, in terms of both knowledge and practice. Nothing remains of all that now, except for us to consider the fate of its people, as brought on first by themselves and secondly by their enemies.

The Andalusians were united and loved one another, such that an individual would empathise with his brother and feel both his pain and his joy. This was the source of their shared strength over any who wished ill upon them. Thus, the state functioned and proceeded to stretch its influence over all the Spanish regions, enfusing the hearts and souls of their inhabitants with peace and tranquillity. As a result, the eminent and learned were free to display the abilities which Allāh had granted them. Astonishing works were written and thought was elevated to a level the vestiges of which we remain proud of today. Amongst these intellectuals were writers of literature, wise philosophers and skilled craftsmen whose legacy include the Mosque of Cordoba, Alhambra Palace and remarkable bridges.

They continued in this manner until Satan came between them, turning them against one another in pursuit of delusive power. Thus, they split into factions, leaving each city with its own Commander of the Faithful and its own pulpit.

Meanwhile, their enemies were getting the better of them, one after another, seeking the help of one Muslim leader against another, in order to gain advantage by the weakening of both. Their power began to diminish and their borders shrank until their authority was reduced to the region of Granada, having once occupied regions of far-flung borders. Thereafter, the enemy had little trouble capturing the lingering remnants and governing the oppressed according to his desire and his vile fanaticism.

All this was due to those Muslim leaders who were greedy for grand titles and disinterested in anything beyond that. The happiness or misery of the Ummah mattered not to them; for they drove the people on like animals in order to obtain their objectives. They did not see that any individual member of society had a right upon them; rather, they held that anyone who offered them advice was deserving of a painful punishment and so would inflict their anger and vengeance upon him with all their might, without reckoning on future recompense.

In such circumstances, truthful advisors recoil and sincere counsellors hide. Only those who cheat and betray are successful. Truth disappears from view and is diluted with falsehood by those who would misrepresent it. Then, when disaster strikes or the enemy musters his horses and his men, defeat is closer to the Ummah than the jugular vein. Are there not lessons in this which catch the eye and awaken the heart? Should these lessons not spur the individual members of the Ummah to attend to its overall interests, and to abandon their own personal conflicts for the benefit of their lands, so that they avoid becoming prey for the hunters and loot for the plunderers? And so that they are not held responsible for the resulting catastrophes which afflict the Ummah, such that subsequent generations curse them as the source of that evil?

﴿إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ﴾

Indeed, in that are signs for a people who reason. (16:12)

THE STATE OF ANDALUSIA UNDER ISLAMIC RULE

Andalusia under the Umayyad Caliphate and thereafter was a world-leader in terms of knowledge, industry and literature.

The Caliphs patronised intellectual life and as a result Andalusia produced leading jurists and ḥadīth scholars, as well as great philosophers, doctors and astronomers.

These included the Imām of hadith scholars, Yaḥyā ibn Yaḥyā al-Laythī, narrator of the *Muwattaʿa*’ from Imām Mālik. He was trustworthy, devout, venerated by rulers and refrained from accepting any governorship. It was he who spread the legal school (*madhhab*) of Imām Mālik in Andalusia. He died in 234/848.

Another was Imām Mundhir ibn Saʿīd al-Ballūṭī, the jurist and judge (*qāḍī*), who was Chief Judge of Cordoba. As a judge, he feared criticism from no one in dispensing justice. One anecdote about his deeds tells how the Caliph Nāṣir needed to purchase a building in Cordoba and felt inclined towards a building which was used as an orphanage, where the orphans were in the charge of the judge. Adjoining the orphanage there was a very profitable bath. The caliph sent someone to value the property, while the judge sent someone to act as agent on behalf of the orphans. The former was told, “No sale can take place without the judge’s permission; so the caliph sent an emissary to the judge about the matter. The messenger was told, “Selling the property of orphans is not permissible except for certain reasons, such as out of necessity, due to severe weakness or in good fortune. As for necessity, these orphans have no need to sell; neither

are they in a state of severe weakness. As for good fortune, this is its place; therefore, if the Commander of the Faithful gives them what is clearly a good price, I will order their agent to sell. Otherwise, I will not.” This answer was conveyed to the caliph, who displayed indifference towards buying the property, although he inwardly hoped to fulfil his desire for obtaining it. Fearing that the caliph would become determined and that the orphans would suffer as a result, Judge Mundhir instructed the agent acting on behalf of the orphans to demolish the orphanage and sell the rubble, which he did.

In fact, the property’s value was greater than had been estimated to the caliph and when the news reached him, he was loath to see it demolished; he therefore ordered the agent to cease the demolition. The agent ceded that it was the judge who had instructed him to do so. At this, the caliph sent to Judge Mundhir, demanding to know whether it was he who had ordered the orphanage to be reduced to rubble. “Yes,” he replied. “What led you to do so?” asked the caliph. He replied, “In doing so, I was following the Words of the Most High:

﴿أَمَّا السَّفِينَةُ فَكَانَتْ لِمَسَاكِينَ يَعْمَلُونَ فِي الْبَحْرِ فَأَرَدْتُ أَنْ
أَعْيِبَهَا وَكَانَ وَرَاءَهُمْ مَلِكٌ يَأْخُذُ كُلَّ سَفِينَةٍ غَصْبًا﴾

As for the ship, it belonged to poor people working at sea. So
I intended to damage it, as there was a king behind them
who seized every [good] ship by force. (18:79)

Your estimators valued the property on this basis and it is in this respect that you are deluded. Now, its rubble has proven to be worth more and its courtyard remains in addition to the adjacent bath. Moreover, Allāh Most High has given consideration to the orphans.” Then Caliph ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān showed forbearance, saying: “We are

above finding fault with the truth. May Allāh Most High reward you well on my behalf and on behalf of your charges.”

Imām Mundhir ibn Sa‘īd al-Ballūṭī died in 355/966.

Another member of the Andalusian intelligentsia was the famous blind Qur’ān reciter (*qārī’*), Imām Abū’l-Qāsim ash-Shāṭibī⁸⁷, author of *Ḥirz al-Amānī*, and known for the Shāṭibī mode (*qirā’ah*) of Qur’an recitation. He travelled to Cairo (Qāhirah), Egypt, and made his home there, where he occupied the position of head instructor of recitation at the Fādiliyyah School.

He died in 590/1194.

Another was the jurist, exegete (*mufasssir*) and judge, Imām Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn al-‘Arabī, chief judge in the town of Seville and Imām of jurisprudential principles (*uṣūl al-fiqh*) and derived laws (*furū’*). He travelled east with his father to Syria, Iraq and Baghdad (Baghdād). There he studied under the great scholars and in Alexandria (Iskandariyyah), Egypt, he learnt from all of them.

He died in 543/1148.

In addition, there was the Imām of grammar, Muḥammad ibn Mālik, author of the *Alfiyyah*, the *Tashīl* and other books of grammar. He was, in the field of grammar, an unsurpassable ocean, while his study of Arab poetry which is cited as a source of grammar and language is remarkable. The learned imāms were perplexed by his mastery of grammar, in addition to his religiosity, worship, truthfulness, goodly manner and complete intellect. He emigrated from Andalusia to Damascus, where he died in 672/1274.

One of those famous in the field of medicine was ‘Abd al-Malik ibn Abī Bakr ibn Zuhr. He travelled east and was appointed as head doctor in Baghdad, then Egypt and then Kairouan. Finally, he settled in the city of Dénia in Andalusia, where his fame spread and he

became renowned for being at the forefront of medical knowledge such that he excelled his contemporaries⁸⁸.

Another skilled and renowned physician was ‘Abdullāh ibn Aḥmad ibn al-Bayṭar al-Malāqī, author of the famous *Mufradāt Ibn al-Bayṭar*. He was unique in his day in terms of knowledge of plants. He travelled to the lands of the Greeks and to the furthest Byzantine territories, as well as Northwest Africa, where he met many fellow expert botanists and surveyed and explored the origins of the science. After returning from his travels, he was physician to the ruler of Egypt and Syria, Kāmil ibn al-‘Ādil, who made him chief herbalist (pharmacist) of the Egyptian realm. He was responsible for knowledge of plant identification, classification, location and uses.

He died in 646/1248 in Damascus.

One of Andalusia’s famous scholars and craftsmen was Abū’l-Qāsim ‘Abbās ibn Firnās, the wise man of Andalusia. He was the first to devise a means of manufacturing glass from rock. He was also the first to analyse music and invented the instrument known as the metronome, to keep time without markings or a model. In addition, he attempted flight, covering himself in feathers and attaching wings to his body. He managed to fly through the air for a considerable distance; however, he did not have a successful strategy for landing and eventually injured himself. He did not know that a bird lands on its tail and had not made himself a tail. In his house, he created a model of the firmament, where spectators were shown stars, clouds, lightning and thunder⁸⁹.

The Andalusian philosophers included Ibn Rushd, who taught the Europeans a great deal, such that they benefited from his philosophy and wisdom⁹⁰.

In summary, Andalusia was full of knowledge, wisdom and philosophy, to the extent that students of knowledge from

neighbouring European lands made it their school.

As for great buildings and magnificent palaces, it had influential examples of these, some vestiges of which still remain today. These include: the Mosque of Cordoba, Zahrā' Palace, Alhambra of Granada and the great bridges which were constructed over its rivers.

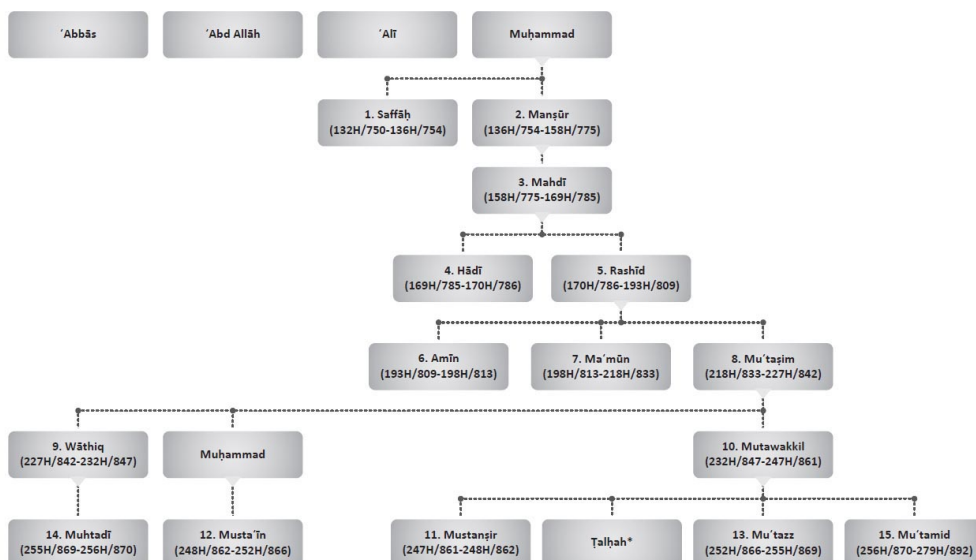
All this was thanks to unity and working for the general good. When estrangement replaced unity and preference and self-interest replaced working for the general good, it all vanished as if it had never existed.

87 His name was Abū'l-Qāsim ibn Firruh ibn Khalaf ar-Ru'aynī and he was descended from the city of Xàtiva (Shāṭibah) in Andalusia.

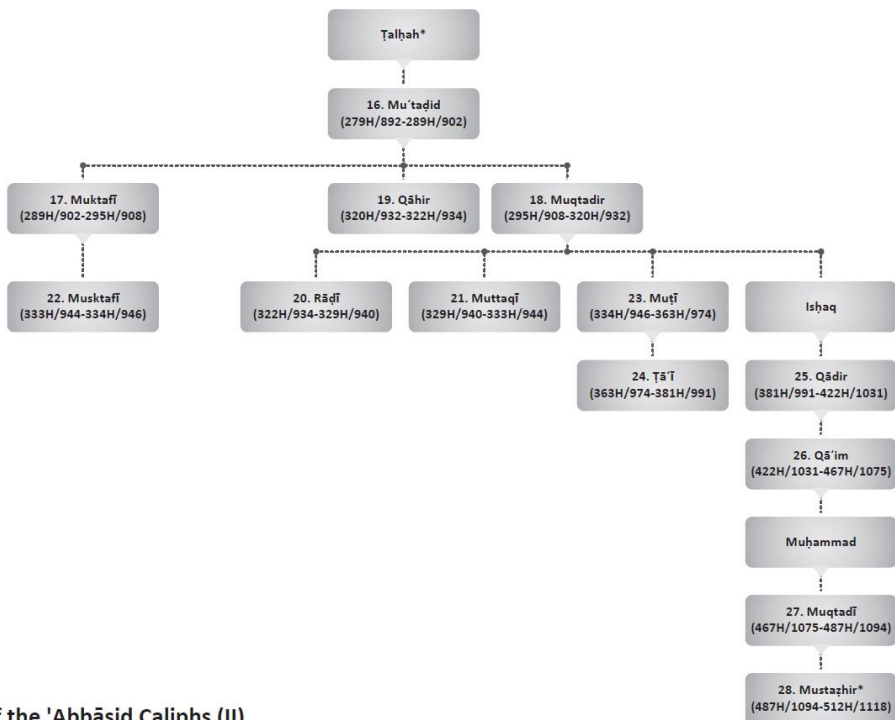
88 He died in 557/1162.

89 He died in 274/887.

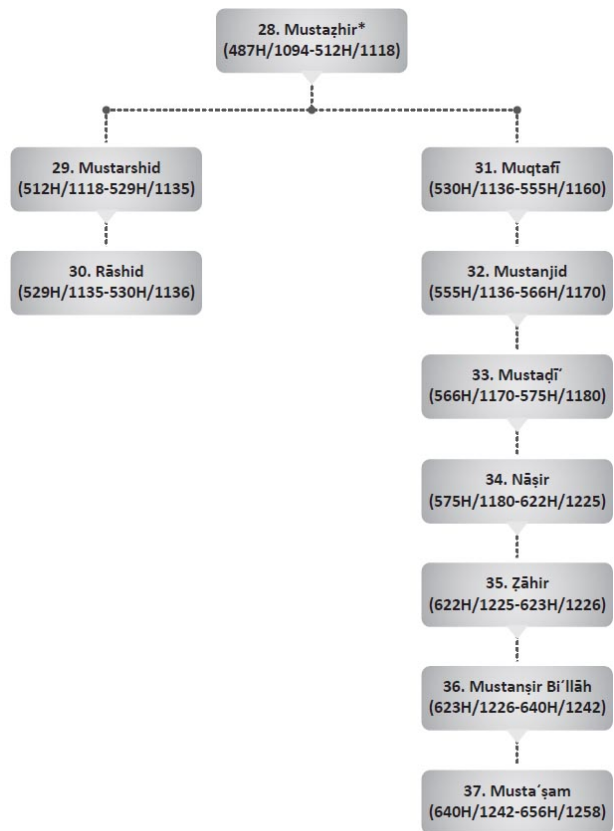
90 He died in 595/1198.



Lineage of the 'Abbāsīd Caliphs (I)



Lineage of the 'Abbāsid Caliphs (II)



Lineage of the 'Abbāsid Caliphs (III)

Lesson Twenty-Six

THE ‘ABBĀSID DYNASTY (AD-DAWLAH AL-‘ABBĀSIYYAH)

The ‘Abbāsīd Dynasty traces its origins to ‘Abbās ibn ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib ibn ‘Abd Manāf, uncle of the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ.


Their rule began in 132/750, when allegiance was sworn to Abū'l-‘Abbās ‘Abdullāh as-Saffāḥ in Kufah. It ended in 656/1258, when the Tatars [i.e. the Mongols] entered Baghdad, killing their last caliph, ‘Abdullāh al-Musta‘ṣim.

They numbered thirty-seven caliphs.⁹¹

1. MUḤAMMAD AS-SAFFĀḤ

Allegiance was sworn to him as Caliph in 132/749 in the city of Kufah⁹². Once this had taken place, he addressed the people at length, explaining his relation and that of his family to the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ and that he had more right than others to assume the role of caliph over the Muslims. He wished the supporters of his state well and established his title from the pulpit, saying, “Prepare yourselves, for I am as-Saffāḥ al-Mubīḥ (the Shedder, the Spiller [of blood]) and ath-Thā’ir al-Mubīr (the Raging Destroyer).”⁹³

This is a horrible title. It would have been more appropriate for him to desire good for the Muslim Ummah and to overlook the past mistakes of his opponents, following the example of the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ who said to the people of Makkah on the day of its conquest: “What do you think I should do with you?” They replied,

“Do well. You are a noble brother, son of a noble brother.” He  said, “Go, you are free.” He forgave them all, although they had harmed him and expelled him from his home.

Hence, it would have been more fitting for his successor to have performed his role with beneficence, forgiving whenever possible. However, Saffāḥ did not do this. After defeating and killing Marwān ibn Muḥammad, the last Umayyad Caliph, he drove out the Umayyad family, attacking any of them that he overpowered. Thus, he relinquished his elevated status, deceiving those of them whom he had guaranteed safety. He carried out Marwān’s assassination when a client of his came to him and recited:

Let not people’s appearances deceive you;

Beneath the breast is a sickness, a disease.

So lay down the sword and raise the whip

Until no Umayyad remains on Earth to be seen.

Some accounts of Saffāḥ’s extremism are not fit to be related. He eventually afforded security to the Umayyads only due to the intercession of his uncle, Sulaymān ibn ‘Alī. One member of the Umayyad family came to him, driven by fear and with nowhere to escape from terror, and said, “Everywhere I was told to come to you. I was led to you by your virtue. Therefore, either kill me so that I may rest, or return me safe and secure.”

“And who are you?” asked Sulaymān ibn ‘Alī. The Umayyad introduced himself and Sulaymān replied, “Welcome. What do you need?” He said, “The women, whom you are the best person to protect and to whom you are the closest related, fear because of our fear; and those who fear should be feared for.” Then Sulaymān wept

and said, “May Allāh spare your blood, increase your wealth and protect your women.”

Then he wrote to Saffāh:

O Commander of the Faithful, a delegation has come to us from the Umayyads. We have killed them on account of their disobedience, not their kinship; for we are related to them through ‘Abd Manāf. Ties of kinship should be maintained, not destroyed; and promoted, not abandoned. Therefore, if the Commander of the Faithful sees fit to hand them over to me, let him do so. And if he does so, let him send a general communication to the cities. Thanks be to Allāh Most High for His Blessing upon us and Goodness towards us.

The Caliph agreed to his request. This was the first guarantee of safety that was given to the Umayyads⁹⁴.

The reign of Abū’l-‘Abbās as-Saffāh was filled with internal unrest because, in founding a state which he intended to establish by force, his officials had used more force than necessary to suppress the discord. This unrest was one reason for the Byzantine Emperor, Constantine, coming to Malatya⁹⁵, a Muslim stronghold. He conquered it and drove out its inhabitants, before moving on to Qālīqalā [now Erzurum]⁹⁶. He camped close by and dispatched an Armenian amīr, who conquered the city and killed its men.

Saffāh died in the middle of the month of Dhū’l-Ḥijjah, 136/754⁹⁷.

2. ABŪ JA‘FAR ‘ABDULLĀH AL-MANŞŪR

Manṣūr was appointed by his brother to succeed him after his death. He has been described⁹⁸ as: “having one of the best characters in private and most tolerant of the playfulness of his young children. However, as soon as he donned his garment, his face clouded over, his eyes reddened and he was capable of anything.”

He used to say: “There are four individuals whom I require to be at my door. No one who comes to my door will be more virtuous than them. They are the pillars of the state without whom it is impossible to rule. One of them is a judge who fears no blame in the way of Allāh. Another is a chief of police who obtains justice for the weak from the strong. The third is a tax collector who exacts what is necessary without injustice.” Then he would grip his index finger three times, saying each time, “Ahhh, ahhh”. People would ask him, “What is the [fourth], Commander of the Faithful?” He would reply, “A postmaster who conveys news from those others correctly.”

He would be busy during the day with commands and interdictions, governorates and depositions, goods from the ports and border regions, ensuring security on the roads, consideration of tax and spending, and concern for the welfare of his subjects and favour towards their peace and tranquillity. When he had performed the Afternoon Prayer (*Ṣalāt al-ʿAṣr*) he would sit down with his family. Having performed the Evening Prayer (*Ṣalāt al-ʿIshāʾ*), he would sit and examine what had been recorded about the ports, border towns and remote regions, taking advice from his companions. When a third of the night had passed, he would retire to bed and his companions would depart. After the second third of the night had passed, he would arise, perform ablution (*wuḍūʾ*) and pray until the sun began to rise. Then he would go out and lead the people in prayer. Finally, he would return and sit in his hall.

It was Manṣūr who firmly established ʿAbbāsīd rule, and it was he who was responsible for assaulting their opponents, albeit with excessive force.

At the beginning of his reign, his uncle, ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿAlī, disobeyed him, whilst in the vicinity of Nuṣaybīn⁹⁹ preparing for the summer assaults¹⁰⁰. Manṣūr dispatched against him an army commanded by Abū Muslim al-Khurāsānī. The two armies met at various points in the vicinity of Nuṣaybīn. After six months of fighting, ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿAlī was eventually defeated and fled in the direction of Basrah, until Manṣūr guaranteed his security.

When Abū Muslim returned from this clear victory, Abū Jaʿfar al-Manṣūr tricked him into appearing before him and treacherously killed him¹⁰¹, despite the fact that it was he who had managed their propaganda campaign for the Caliphate, thereby establishing them as rulers.

Abū Muslim was to the ʿAbbāsids as Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf ath-Thaqafī was to the Umayyads. They were both oppressors and tyrants, neither of whom cared whether blood was spilt as long as it pleased the ruler and strengthened his power. However, Allāh inflicts one oppressor upon another, out of kindness and mercy towards His slaves.

Thereafter, Manṣūr faced numerous rebellions, which he suppressed with force. However, the greatest attack to be afflicted upon him was by Muḥammad and Ibrāhīm, the sons of ʿAbdullāh ibn al-Ḥasan ibn al-Ḥasan ibn ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib¹⁰². When Manṣūr learnt of their advance, he sent to Madīnah and had all the descendants of Ḥasan ibn ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib imprisoned and restrained. They died in their prison and chains, with only a few of them escaping.

Muḥammad ibn ʿAbdullāh ibn al-Ḥasan had revolted in Madīnah, after most of its people had sworn allegiance to him, and had captured Manṣūr's governor of Madīnah. Manṣūr therefore dispatched a force under the command of his nephew, ʿĪsā ibn Mūsā. Fierce fighting ensued between the two sides, in which Muḥammad ibn ʿAbdullāh al-Ḥasanī was killed and his head was taken to Manṣūr.

As for Muḥammad's brother, Ibrāhīm, he revolted in Basrah. The two had agreed to stage their revolts simultaneously; however, the latter was delayed after he was afflicted by a bout of smallpox. Hence, Manṣūr sent for ʿĪsā ibn Mūsā, whom he directed to confront Ibrāhīm in Basrah. Ibrāhīm likewise advanced towards him and they met some 16 leagues [i.e. 56 miles] from Kufah, where they engaged in fierce fighting in which Ibrāhīm and most of those with him were killed¹⁰³.

Manṣūr continued to repair such rents whenever they appeared until, after considerable efforts, he was in complete control of affairs.

One of the great monuments to his legacy is the city of Baghdad¹⁰⁴, the preeminent Islamic metropolis. He had it constructed with two walls, the inner wall being higher than the outer wall. In the centre was built the palace and next to it the main mosque. The bricks used to build the palace were one cubit wide by one cubit long; when it was destroyed, some of them were weighed at 116 rotls [a weight varying from one to five pounds]. The cost of building the city, including the mosque, palace and markets, was 4000833 dirhams. The main thoroughfare, built in 146/763 was made forty cubits wide.

In 151/768, Raṣāfah was built for Maḥdī on the eastern bank of the Tigris.

Thereafter, Baghdad grew in stature until it became the greatest of the Muslim cities, while its population increased until it had surpassed two million. It was the site of advances in learning and industry.

During the reign of Maṣṣūr, Ṣāliḥ ibn ʿAlī al-ʿAbbāsī conducted a military campaign against the Byzantine Empire and repaired what the Byzantine Emperor had destroyed of the Malatya city walls. After that, he reconstructed Qālīqalā and returned its inhabitants; he then assigned to it a military force from the Arabian Peninsula, who remained there and protected the city.

Maṣṣūr's reign did not witness any new conquests. Rather, he was occupied with the repression of dissension and establishment of his rule.

He died in 158/775 in Makkah, whilst performing the Ḥajj, and was buried there¹⁰⁵.

3. MUḤAMMAD AL-MAHDĪ (REIGNED 158/775–169/785)

Muḥammad al-Mahdī was appointed by his father as his successor. He became Caliph at a time when the [Islamic] world was peaceful and secure, his father having quieted its raging waters. Mahdī was therefore kind-hearted and merciful towards the populace.

When he visited the Mosque of the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ, he found inscribed on its wall the name: Walīd ibn ‘Abd al-Malik al-Umawī, since it was he who had renovated and extended it. Mahdī ordered that it be removed and replaced with his name. This is a kind of misappropriation which kings and amīrs are fond of, each of them desiring for every righteous act of his predecessors to be attributed to him. Such acts without doubt entail a perversion of history and have serious consequences.

Mahdī achieved some significant internal reforms, such as implementing a salary for lepers and prisoners in all regions.

Mahdī himself participated in military campaigns against the Byzantine Empire, accompanied by his son, Rashīd. He descended with his army upon the fortress of Samālū¹⁰⁶ and laid siege to it until he had taken it securely. He went on to achieve many conquests and returned without harm.

Thereafter he went forth with his army on one more occasion, advancing until he reached Constantinople; however, he returned when its ruler reconciled with him and agreed to pay the *jizyah* tax.

Mahdī died in Māsabadhān¹⁰⁷ in 169/785.

4. MŪSĀ AL-HĀDĪ (REIGNED 169/785–170/786)

Mūsā al-Hādī became Caliph after the death of his father, who had appointed him as his successor. His reign was too short for him to accomplish any great achievements. He intended to depose his brother, Rashīd, since his father had appointed both of them as heirs apparent—first Hādī, followed by Rashīd; however, death overtook him in 170/786, before he had managed to do so. His reign had lasted no more than a year and three months.

91 See figure: Lineage of the ‘Abbāsīd Caliphs.

92 Allegiance was sworn to him on 13 Rabī‘ al-Awwal, before the last Umayyad Caliph, Marwān ibn Muḥammad, was killed.

93 The original has: ‘al-Munih’, which is meaningless. The correction is from *Suyūṭī’s Tārīkh al-Khulafā’*.

94 Saffāh’s harsh treatment was not confined to the Umayyads. He would kill most of his clients for the merest accusation. For instance, he killed both Abū Salamah al-Khallāl and Sulaymān ibn Kathīr, pillars of his state and its strong supports, on account of a doubt he had concerning them.

95 A famous Byzantine city which borders Syria.

96 A city in Greater Armenia, in the vicinity of Ahlat. It was built by the Armenian queen, Qālī, who named it: Qālī Qālah, meaning ‘Qālī’s Benificence’. Later, the name was arabicised to Qālīqalā.

97 His age was a mere thirty-three years old.

98 He was described in this way by Salāmah al-Abrash.

99 A city in the Arabian Peninsula on the main caravan route from Mosul to Syria.

100 The summer assaults (*ṣawā’if*) refer to attacks undertaken by Muslim commanders in the summer on the borders with Byzantium in Northern Syria. Similarly, attacks against Byzantium in winter were known as ‘winter assaults’ (*shawātī*). The first Muslim commander to undertake the summer assaults was ‘Abdullāh ibn Qays al-Kindī and the first caliph to do so was Sayyidunā Mu‘āwīyah ibn Abī Sufyān. (See *Al-A‘lāq al-Khaṭīrah*, Vol. 1, Part 2, p. 197 onwards.)

101 This occurred in 137/755.

102 They revolted in 145/762.

103 Manṣūr repayed his cousin, ʿĪsā ibn Mūsā, for his victory over Muhammad and Ibrāhīm, the sons of ʿAbdullah ibn al-Ḥasan, by withdrawing him as successor to the Caliphate, and appointing his son, Mahdī, as Caliph after him.

104 Construction of Baghdad began in 140/757 and was completed in 149/766.

105 He was buried in a place named Bi'r Maymūn, near Makkah. He was aged sixty-three.

106 The fortress of Samālū was in the border strongholds of Syria, near Mobsuestia and Tarsus.

107 Māsabadhān was a Transoxanian city, near Radhdh. It was conquered by Ḍirār ibn al-Khaṭṭāb in 17/638.

Lesson Twenty-Seven

5. HĀRŪN AR-RASHĪD (REIGNED 170/786–193/809)

Hārūn ar-Rashīd was appointed as Caliph after the death of his brother, Mūsā al-Hādī, as stipulated by his father.

On assuming power, he appointed Yaḥyā ibn Khālīd al-Barmakī as vizier (*wazīr*), telling him: “I entrust you with the affairs of the populace; so judge therein as you see fit, depose whoever you see fit to depose and employ whoever you see fit to employ.” With that he handed over his seal.

This Yaḥyā was the father of Ja‘far and Faḍl, two eminent figures under Rashīd’s rule.

During Rashīd’s reign, the Byzantine Empire was ruled by the Empress Irene, who was at peace with the Caliph and paid the *jizyah* tax. After her death, however, rulership of the Byzantine Empire was assumed by Nikephoros, who wrote to Rashīd:

From Nikephoros, Emperor of Byzantium, to Hārūn, Ruler of the Arabs

Thereafter:

The Empress who preceeded me as ruler used to afford you the position of a rook¹⁰⁸ and herself that of a pawn¹⁰⁹, handing over to you a portion of her wealth when you should deservedly have been giving her twice as much. However, this was the result of female weakness and stupidity. Thus, if you read this letter of mine, return what you have obtained of her wealth and come to me yourself. Otherwise, the sword will come between us.

When Rashīd read the letter he was overcome with anger, such that no one could bear to look at him. Then he called for a pen and wrote on the back of the letter:

In the Name of Allāh, the Beneficent, the Merciful

From Hārūn, Commander of the Faithful, to Nikephoros,
the dog of Byzantium

I have read your letter. You will see the response before
you hear it.

On the same day, he set out for Heraclea¹¹⁰ and conquered it.

When he began to survey the lands, Nikephoros asked him for reconciliation based on an annual tax that he would pay, to which Rashīd agreed.

However, once Rashīd had returned, having reached Raqqah, Nikephoros renounced the contract, knowing that Rashīd would not turn back due to the severe cold. When news of this arrived, no one dared to inform Rashīd. Eventually, he was tricked into hearing the news at the hands of a poet¹¹¹ who appeared before him and recited:

What you granted Nikephoros he has abandoned;

Now the ring of perdition encircles him.

O Commander of the Faithful, rejoice therein!

For it is a great God-given victory,

A victory to add to the victories,

Led therein by your triumphant standard.

When Rashīd heard this, he said, “Has Nikephoros indeed done so?” Then he returned to Byzantine territory during extremely harsh conditions and with great trouble. When he eventually reached their

lands, he stayed there until he had recovered, taken his revenge and achieved his purpose.

Something which Rashīd may be criticised for is his assault upon the Bārmakids¹¹²: his killing of Jaʿfar ibn Yaḥyā and imprisonment of his brother, Faḍl, and father, Yaḥyā, who were eminent figures of his government.

They were exemplars of generosity and possessed eloquence, refinement and gallantry which Allāh had given to none of their contemporaries. Nevertheless, their rivals grew more resentful the higher their status became; hence, they aroused Rashīd's anger against them until he dealt with them as he did, seizing their property and taking everything they owned, so that it was as if they had never existed.

After their fall, Abū Nuwās said:

Now we seek rest and so do our mounts;

Those who served and were served now desist.

So say to the beasts they are spared the over-night trek

Over desert folds and endless tracts.

And say to Death: 'You have triumphed over Jaʿfar;

But you will vanquish no servant thereafter.'

And say also to gifts: 'Be gracious after favour;'

And say to calamities: 'Each day you come anew.'

Beware of a sharp-edged Bārmakid blade,

Smote down by a sharp Hāshimite sword.

No other caliph was as generous with wealth as Rashīd; neither were the good deeds of any beneficent person wasted on him. He inclined towards people of etiquette and religious understanding and hated insincerity in religion.

Rashīd died¹¹³ at the beginning of the month of Jumādā'l-Ūlā, 194/809, in Tous¹¹⁴.

6. MUḤAMMAD AL-AMĪN (REIGNED 193/809–198/813)

He was appointed as Caliph after his father, who had named both his sons as his successors: Amīn, followed by Ma'mūn, with the latter acting as Amīr of Khorasan, according to the wishes of his father. Amin intended to depose his brother and to appoint his son, Mūsā, as his heir apparent instead, a plan which was the result of poor judgement and a lack of good counsel from his viziers. He had sought the advice of many of his amīrs, all of whom agreed with him, except Khuzaymah ibn Khāzim, who told him: 'O Commander of the Faithful, those who lie to you do not advise you and those who tell you the truth do not cheat you. Do not embolden the amīrs to depose, lest they depose you; nor charge them with violating a contract, lest they violate your contract and their pledge of allegiance to you. A traitor is disappointed and a betrayer is despised, but nobody listens to him.'

Of course, when Ma'mūn learnt of this, he was not pleased. At this point, Amin sent an army under the command of 'Alī ibn 'Īsā ibn Māhān to fight his brother, while Ma'mūn dispatched an army commanded by Ṭāhir ibn al-Ḥusayn. The two forces met outside Rey¹¹⁵ and Ṭāhir was victorious. He wrote to Ma'mūn:

In the Name of Allāh, the Benificent the Merciful

I write this letter to the Commander of the Faithful with the head of 'Alī ibn 'Īsā in my hand, his ring on my finger and his troops under my control.

With peace...

After that, it was proposed to Ma'mūn that he become Caliph and there were calls for Amīn to be deposed, with the governors of Makkah and Madīnah pledging allegiance to Ma'mūn. The latter then ordered Ṭāhir to advance to Baghdad; he did so and, having surrounded and captured the city, killed Amīn.

This took place in 198/813. Amīn was the first 'Abbāsīd Caliph to be assassinated.

7. 'ABDULLĀH AL-MA'MŪN (REIGNED 198/813–218/833)


With the assassination of Amīn, Ma'mūn was free to rule. Allegiance was pledged to him officially while he remained resident in Khorasan.

In 204/819, he advanced to Baghdad, following a rebellion there on the part of Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mahdī, his uncle, who intended to usurp the caliphate. He was overtaken and captured, but Ma'mūn pardoned him.

With the arrival of Ma'mūn in Baghdad, the discord ended and the people were pacified.

Ma'mūn had the best character of all the 'Abbāsīds. He was also the most knowledgeable and inclined towards religious scholars and men of letters, encouraging them with abundant gifts. As a consequence, demand for knowledge increased unprecedentedly during his reign and various books of learning were translated from Greek and other languages. He was also the first to measure the ground level in the regions of Iraq.

State revenue was greater during his reign than at any other time. This was due to the fact that the affairs of the various regions were in order, while the populace, being tranquil and content,

turned their attention to pursuing agriculture and developing manufacturing skills, from which they both gained and benefited the state. His characteristics included pardoning those who erred and treating well those who did good. As a result, he was loved and held in affection by the populace. This served to strengthen him; for the strongest of rulers is one who has the support of his charges. Such will not be the case unless he treats them well and with justice and avoids traits which are inconsistent with the character of [just] rulers, such as miserliness, greed, hypocrisy and inciting dislike in people. Such was Ma'mūn .

During his reign, in 212/827, Ma'mūn provided Ziyādat Allāh Ibn al-Aghlab, Amīr of Ifrīqiyah, with a great army with which to conquer Sicily. He went there and conquered most of its cities, including Palermo¹¹⁶, in 216/831.

In 215/830, Ma'mūn himself set out to attack the Byzantine Empire. He passed through Manbij, Dabiq, Antioch (Anṭākiyah), Mopsuestia (Muṣṣāḥ) and Tarsus (Ṭarsūs) and proceeded to the lands of Byzantium. Meanwhile, his son, 'Abbās, entered via Malatya. Ma'mūn attacked the fortress of Qurrah and took it by force, while his troops conquered other fortresses.

Ma'mūn died in 218/833, at the end of the month of Rajab¹¹⁷.

8. MUḤAMMAD AL-MU'ṬAṢIM (REIGNED 218/833–227/842)

He became Caliph after his brother, Ma'mūn, who appointed him as his successor. Under his rule, the number of Turks who had become clients (*mawālī*) was extremely high; Mu'ṭaṣim therefore formed from them a great military force. He also built for them the city of

Samarra (Sāmarrā’), which he made his summer residence. Building work began in 221/836.

During his reign, the Byzantine Emperor, Theophilos son of Michael, advanced into Muslim lands with a large force until they reached Sozopetra¹¹⁸, where they killed the men and took the women and children as captives. Theophilos then attacked the people of Malatya. He mutilated those whom he captured, gouging out their eyes and cutting off their noses and ears. When news of this reached al-Mu‘taṣim and that one of the women captives had cried out, “O, Mu‘taṣim” as she walked, he said, from his bed: “I am here!” Then he arose immediately, shouting throughout his palace, “To arms! To arms!” He asked which was the most impregnable of the Byzantine cities and was told, “Amorium”, which had not been attacked since the coming of Islām; furthermore, it was the most eminent Christian city, more honourable in their view than Constantinople.

Mu‘taṣim set out from Samarra, having mustered a force which was larger than any his predecessors had ever mustered. This great army proceeded until it reached Armorium—lying seven days’ march north of Ankara—where a fierce battle took place between the Byzantine forces who were in the city and Muctasims troops, ending in the latter’s conquest of the great city.

Mu‘taṣim was more military- than administrative-minded. He took no pleasure in constructing beautiful buildings and was more generous when it came to military expenditure than in any other matter¹¹⁹.

There is a lesson to be learnt on selecting people, from what Muctasim told Ishāq ibn Ibrāhīm al-Muṣ‘abī: “I contemplate my brother, Ma’mūn, who selected four men, all of whom were

successful; while I myself selected four, none of whom were successful.

Ma'mūn selected Ṭāhir ibn al-Ḥusayn, whose exploits you have seen and heard about; his son, 'Abdullāh ibn Ṭāhir, who is a man without rival; yourself—and, by Allāh, you would never complicate the position of the ruler; and your brother, Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm—and where is his like?

As for myself, I selected Afshīn, whose fate you witnessed after his treachery became apparent; Ashnās, who was a failure; itāj, who amounted to nothing; and Sayf, who proved meaningless. These are in addition to all those client Turks.” Ishāq responded, “Can I respond safe from your anger?” “Yes,” Mu‘taṣim answered. He said, “O Commander of the Faithful, your brother looked to the origins; he used them, and they were fruitful. However, the Commander of the Faithful uses derivatives, which are not fruitful, since they have no origins.” At this, Mu‘taṣim said, “Truly, Ishāq, the difficulties I have endured throughout this period were easier to bear than this answer.”

Mu‘taṣim’s legacy includes a care and concern for those clients who have no known origin in the Muslim community. Some examples of their effectiveness will be mentioned.

Mu‘taṣim died in the month of Rabī‘ al-Awwal, 227/842.

108 The rook is a legendary bird, found in ancient descriptions, and is also a chess piece.

109 That is, a foot-soldier, such as a pawn in chess.

110 A city in the Byzantine Empire, named Heraclea after the daughter of the Byzantine Emperor.

111 The poet was Abū Muḥammad ibn Muhammad ‘Abdullāh Ibn Yūsuf.


112 The fall of the Bārmakids occurred in 187/803. All the reasons and explanations given by historians for this fall are strange. Allāh knows best what the truth of the matter was.

113 It is worth mentioning that the Idrisid Dynasty (Adārisah) was established in Northwest Africa during the reign of Rashid.

114 Tous is a city in Khorasan, some ten leagues from Nishapur.

115 The famous city of Rey was one of the most important and renowned cities on a busy route and the capital of the mountain towns. It lies 160 leagues from Nishapur and 27 leagues from Qazvin.

116 Palermo is the largest city on the island of Sicily in the Western Mediterranean, lying on the coast.

117 Ma’mūm was favorably disposed towards members of the Prophet’s  household (*Āl al-Bayt*), to the extent that he was accused of Shī‘ism. His reign also witnessed the start of the controversy surrounding the claim that the Qur’ān was created, which was led by the Mu‘tazilah and in which the religious scholars (*‘ulamā’*) were treated extremely harshly.

118 The city of Sozopetra was situated between Malatya and Samosata. The event took place on the Byzantine border.

119 He was the last Caliph to personally participate in any military campaign against the Byzantine Empire. Also during his reign, Bābak al-Kurramī al-Majūsī was killed (223/838), having revolted twenty years previously in Azerbaijan; as was Māzyār ibn Bandār al-Majūsī (224/839).

Lesson Twenty-Eight

9. HĀRŪN AL-WĀTHIQ (REIGNED: 227/842–232/847)

He became Caliph after his father, Mu‘taṣim, who appointed him as his suecessor. Wāthiq surrounded himself with ‘Alids (‘Alawīyūn)¹²⁰, honouring them greatly, treating them extremely well and promising them wealth. He distributed amongst the people of the Two Sanctuaries of Makkah and Madīnah such abundant wealth that, during his reign, there were no beggars there.

As Caliph, he freed sailing ships from paying tax, which amounted to a vast amount of wealth.

Also during his reign, in 228/842, the city of Messina¹²¹ was conquered by Faḍl ibn Ja‘far al-Hamdānī. In addition, the people of Nabeul¹²² sought security from him and accepted his rule.

Wāthiq died in the month of Dhū’l-Ḥijjah, 232/847.

10. JA‘FAR AL-MUTAWAKKIL (REIGNED 232/847–247/861)

Allegiance was sworn to Mutawakkil after the death of his brother, Wāthiq. He was appointed by men of power within the state, since his brother had not assigned a successor.

At the start of his reign, he dismissed the vizier of his brother, Wāthiq, Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Malik az-Zayyāt¹²³, confiscating his property and everything he owned and then torturing him severely until he died. During his time as vizier, Ibn az-Zayyāt had been an oppressive tyrant; hence, he was afflicted with an even greater oppressor than himself. Let all who are oppressors consider this!

The matter did not end there. In fact, Mutawakkil removed many of his father's governors, punishing them as examples.

Mutawakkil hated the 'Alids, in contrast to the position of Ma'mūn, and all his companions were of the same opinion¹²⁴.

The conquest of Qasriyana, the second Sicilian city after Syracuse¹²⁵, was also achieved during his reign¹²⁶.

In 245/859, Mutawakkil had his own city built, which he named Ja'fariyyah and Mutawakkiliyyah. He spent more than two million dinars on its construction, which included digging a river to irrigate the surrounding area.

At the end of his reign, he became estranged from his son and heir apparent, Muḥammad al-Muntaṣir, who came to an agreement with the most powerful Turks that they should turn against Mutawakkil. They executed this on 4 Shawwāl, 247/861.

He was the second 'Abbāsīd Caliph to be assassinated.

11. MUḤAMMAD AL-MUNTAṢIR (REIGNED: 247/861–248/862)

He assumed power after the assassination of his father, Mutawakkil, but Allāh did not permit him to enjoy his rule, in recompense for his father's murder. Hence, he reigned for no longer than a year.

May Allāh destroy such fruitless domination, which creates division between a son and his father. Rather, may Allāh destroy all worldly ambitions; for they often lead to cruelty and blind people from what is best for them in respect of their religious and worldly life.

12. AḤMAD AL-MUSTA'IN IBN MUḤAMMAD IBN AL-MUṬAṢIM (REIGNED: 248/862–252/866)

Mustaʿīn was appointed as Caliph by the client Turks who controlled the reigns of the army and who were now the source of power.¹²⁷

From this time until the downfall of the ʿAbbāsīd Dynasty the reigns of power lay in their hands and they appointed and deposed whomsoever they wished, according to their desires.

This is amongst the greatest perversions which Muʿtaṣīm brought upon his descendents, in fact on the whole Muslim Ummah after him.

What is to be expected of people who are strong and who are led by their desires, who exist in a sphere in which there are no laws governing the appointment of caliphs, but which the community opposes abandoning? By Allāh, nothing is to be expected from them other than the height of evil and poor judgement.

Worse still, they themselves were disunified, owing to their differing individual desires, which led to many evil acts. It was the Ummah that suffered as a result of all this and the standing of the caliphate was diminished.

This in turn strengthened the position of the Byzantine Empire and led to them terrorising Muslim lands from the north. It also started a process of autonomisation in peripheral territories of the ʿAbbāsīd State. The reader will see the fragmentation which ensued.

Mustaʿīn was deposed at the beginning of 252/866, about which one ʿAbbāsīd poet said:

Caliph Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad has been displaced

And his successor will be too, or slain.

And as his father's family's dominion fades,

Not a single one do we see enjoy his reign.

Alas! Banū ʿAbbās, your course of murder

Of your devoutest widely wends

Its way to worldly heights; life is rent asunder,
Slashed to shreds which will not mend.

13. MUḤAMMAD AL-MU‘TAZZ (REIGNED 252/866– 255/869)

He was proposed as Caliph after his uncle, Musta‘īn,¹²⁸ had been deposed. He was not slow in ordering the assassination of the latter, whose head was brought to him while he was playing chess. He said, “Put it aside until I have finished the game.” Having done so, he examined the head and commanded that it be buried.

His reign witnessed the birth of the Ṣaffārid Dynasty (Ṣaffāriyyah) in Sistan and that of the Ṭūlunids (Ṭūluniyyah) in Egypt¹²⁹.

At the end of the month of Rajab, 255/869, Mu‘tazz was deposed by the Turks. He was handed over to torturers, who prevented him from eating or drinking until he died.

14. MUḤAMMAD AL-MUHTADĪ IBN AL-WATHIQ (REIGNED: 255/869–256/870)

He was appointed as Caliph after his uncle, Mu‘tazz.

His reign witnessed a revolt in Basrah led by the Negro (*Zanj*) leader, ‘Alī ibn Muḥammad, who wreaked havoc and corruption in the land.

The ‘Abbāsids experienced great difficulty in subduing him.

During Muhtadī’s reign, the people lived in a state of turmoil, without security for their property or guarantee of safety.

In the middle of the month of Rajab, 256/870, Muhtadī was deposed and killed, as had become the norm. This was despite the

fact that his personal qualities were good¹³⁰; but then, those who act upon their arbitrary desires are rarely satisfied with anyone.

15. AḤMAD AL-MU‘TAMID IBN AL-MUTAWAKKIL (REIGNED 256/870–279/892)

He was appointed as Caliph after his nephew Muhtadī.

While he was in power, the *Zanj* Revolt ran out of control in Basrah and Persia.

In addition, Ya‘qūb ibn al-Layth aṣ-Ṣaffar occupied Nishapur and Tabaristan.

Also during his reign, the Sāmānid Dynasty (Sāmāniyyah) was established in Transoxania, led by Naṣr ibn Aḥmad ibn Asad ibn Sāmān, who was of Turkish origin.

In 270/883, the *Zanj* Revolt was finally suppressed, after fierce warfare between them and the state forces¹³¹.

Mu‘tamid’s reign also witnessed the emergence of the Qarmatians (Qarāmiṭah) in rural Kufah. They were an atheist group, led by a man titled Qarmat, whose name was Ḥamdūn. They represented a calamity for the Muslims, since they considered lawful the blood and property of anyone who opposed them and frequently attacked the Ḥajj pilgrims as they made their way to the House and Sanctuary of Allāh, killing them and seizing their wealth.

Mu‘tamid died in 279/892.

16. AḤMAD AL-MU‘TAḌID IBN ṬALḤAH IBN AL-MUTAWAKKIL (REIGNED 279/892–289/902)

Allegiance was sworn to him after the death of his uncle, Mu‘tamid, who had appointed him as his successor.

Mu‘taḍid was noble, courageous, valiant, determined and virtuous.

Even his companions held him in awe, fearing his authority.

His reign nevertheless saw the Qarmatians become more powerful and do greater harm in Syria, Iraq and Bahrain.

Mu‘taḍid died in 289/902.

17. ‘ALĪ AL-MUKTAFĪ IBN AL-MU‘TAḌID (REIGNED: 289/902–295/908)

Allegiance was sworn to him after the death of his father, Mu‘taḍid, who had appointed him as his successor.

Under Muktafī, the Ṭulūnid Dynasty came to an end in Egypt, which reverted to its former status as an ‘Abbāsīd governorate.

His reign also saw the emergence of the Ḥamdānids (Banū Ḥamdān) in Mosul (Mawṣil). They were a people from the Arabs of Taghlib, whose chief was Abū’l-Ḥijā’ ‘Abdullāh ibn Ḥamdān. Muktafī made him Governor of Mosul. The Ḥamdānids fought famous battles in the war against the Crusaders, who hoped to capture the holy Muslim lands, and were praised by the famous poet, Mutanabbī.

Muktafī died in 295/908.

18. JA‘FAR AL-MUQTADIR IBN AL-MU‘TAḌID (REIGNED 295/908–320/932)

Allegiance was sworn to him following the death of his brother, Muktafī. He was appointed by the state viziers, without prior agreement, although Muktafī had indicated him as his successor while he was severely ill.

Under Muqtadir, an ʿAlid Dynasty emerged in North Africa. This was the Fatimid Dynasty (Fātimiyyah) who would rule Egypt¹³².

Muqtadir's Caliphate was long; however, he was assassinated in 320/932, when the Turks turned against him and killed him.

19. MUḤAMMAD AL-QĀHIR IBN AL-MUʿTADID (REIGNED 320/932–322/934)

Senior statesmen swore allegiance to him following the assassination of his brother, Muqtadir.

During his reign, the Būyid Dynasty (Banū Būyah) emerged in Persia.

Qāhir remained only two years as Caliph and was deposed in the month of Jumādā'l-Ūlā, 322/934¹³³.

20. AḤMAD AR-RĀDĪ IBN AL-MUQTADIR (REIGNED: 322/934–329/940)

Rādī was appointed as Caliph after his uncle, Qāhir, by senior statesmen.

During his reign, the Būyids extended their dominion and proceeded to conquer territory until they were encroaching on Baghdad¹³⁴.

Rādī died in the month of Rabīʿ al-Awwal, 329/940.

21. IBRAHIM AL-MUTTAQĪ (REIGNED: 329/940– 333/944)

Allegiance was sworn to Muttaqī following the death of his brother, Rādī.

His reign was filled with unrest, secession and warring amongst the state's leaders, each desiring power for himself. Meanwhile, the territory controlled by the state was gradually diminishing, without any defence of it or of the Caliphate.

Muttaqī was deposed in 333/944¹³⁵.

One of the most disgraceful acts perpetrated against him was that his eyes were gouged out. What a wretched Caliphate, to have reached such a state!

22. ʿABDULLĀH AL-MUSTAKFĪ IBN AL-MUKTAFĪ (REIGNED: 333/944–334/946)

Allegiance was sworn to Mustakfī after his cousin, Muttaqī, was deposed.

During his reign, Muʿizz ad-Dawlah Ibn Būyah invaded Baghdad¹³⁶. Thereafter, Mustakfī gave him his title, as he had done for his brothers, ʿImād ad-Dawlah and Rukn ad-Dawlah. He also ordered that their titles and agnomens (*kunyahs*) be printed on coins. Thereafter, nothing was left for the Caliph but his title.

It was not long afterwards that Muʿizz ad-Dawlah deposed Mustakfī from his position as Caliph, in 334/946.

23. AL-FADL AL-MUṬĪʿ IBN AL-MUQTADIR (REIGNED: 334/946–363/974)

Allegiance was sworn to Muṭīʿ after his cousin, Mustakfī, was deposed.

During his reign, the role of the Caliph diminished further, such that he no longer had a vizier, but only a secretary to organise his estates and taxes.

Government, on the other hand, was in the hands of Mu‘izz ad-Dawlah, who appointed whomsoever he wished as vizier. The Būyids were convinced that the ‘Alids were more deserving of the Caliphate; thus, they were not religiously motivated to obedience and submission to the ‘Abbāsids.

Under Muṭī‘, the villages and farms of Iraq began to fall into ruin; since Mu‘izz ad-Dawlah granted many of them to his soldiers, who did not attend to their upkeep. Also during his reign, the Byzantine Empire took the cities of Tarsus and Mopsuestia (Muṣīṣah)¹³⁷, in 354/965.

In addition, the ‘Alid Caliph, Mu‘izz, gained control of Egypt, in 358/969.

In the same year, the Byzantine Emperor advanced as far as Syria without anyone preventing him. He reached Tripoli (Ṭarāblus), burnt it down and enslaved its inhabitants; then he proceeded to do the same in Homs. After that, he returned to the coastal towns, which he plundered and burnt. He took possession of eighteen pulpits and many villages. Furthermore, he remained in Syria for two months, moving around at will, without challenge.


In 359/970, the Byzantine Empire captured Antioch. They then dispatched an army to Aleppo; however, the city’s Amīr came to a settlement with them, whereby they would leave in exchange for a tribute.

In 361/972, they invaded the Arabian Peninsula, as far as Nuṣaybīn.

When the people of the Arabian Peninsula realised, they sent a delegation to Baghdad seeking help. The people were alarmed by their news and headed to the Caliph’s residence, saying: “How can Muslims fight one another and leave Byzantium to do as they will

with their lands?” They promised to unleash the armies and wrote to Ibn Ḥamdān, ordering him to muster his forces, which he did. There followed a battle between them and the Byzantine forces at Mīyāfārqn̄ (Silvan)¹³⁸, in which the Byzantines were defeated.



Muṭf was deposed in 363/974¹³⁹.

120 The ‘Alids (‘Alawīyūn) are the family of Sayyidunā ‘Alī ibn Abi Ṭālib  through his sons Ḥasan and Ḥusayn. The most prominent of them during the reign of Wāthiq was Abū’l-Ḥasan ‘Alī al-Hādī ibn Muḥammad al-Jawād ibn ‘Alī ar-Riḍā, who is considered by Twelver Shi‘is to be their tenth Imām.

121 A city on the Sicillian coast, ruled by the Byzantines.

122 A region of Ifrīqiyah, between Tūnis and Sūsah (Sousse).

123 He was Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Malik ibn Abān ibn Ḥamzah Abū Ja‘far Ibn az-Zayyāt, Vizier to the ‘Abbāsīd Caliphs, Mu‘tasim and Wāthiq. He was a scholar of the Arabic language, a man of letters and an eloquent writer and poet, who authored a collection of poetry. He died in 233/847 (*Al-A‘lām*, 6:248).

124 Mutawakkil was openly hostile in displaying his dislike for Sayyidunā ‘Alī , to the extent that he ordered the destruction of the grave of Sayyiduna’l-Ḥusayn  in 237/851.

125 Qasriyana and Syracuse are two large cities in Sicily.

126 His reign also saw the end of the controversy surrounding the doctrine of the creation of the Qur’ān, which was begun under Ma’mūn.

127 During the reign of Musta‘in, Yaḥyā ibn ‘Umar ibn Yaḥyā ibn al-Ḥusayn as-Sabaṭ revolted in Kufah and was killed in 250/865. In the same year, Ḥasan ibn Zayd ad-Dā‘ī rebelled in Tabaristan,

establishing a dynasty (the Zaydl Dynasty) there which lasted until 350/864.

128 Musta‘īn was deposed on 4 Muḥarram 252/866 and killed on 3 Shawwāl 252/866.

129 See Lesson Thirty-Five.

130 Muhtadī was to the ‘Abbāsids what ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Aziz was to the Umayyads. Suyūṭī described him, saying: “He was. . . a pious man of worship, just and strong in executing Allāh’s Command. He was courageous but found no helper or aid.”

131 ‘Alī ibn Muḥammad al-Wazarīnī, titled ‘Friend of the *Zanj*’, revolted in Basrah, in 255/869, during the reign of Muhtadī, as mentioned. The slaves of Basrah rallied around him, his dominion stretched as far as Ahvaz and he attacked Wasīṭ. His allure was so prodigious that at one point he commanded more than 300,000 soldiers and built for himself a fortified city, which he called: Mukhtārah. Then Abū Aḥmad al-Muwaffaq, the brother of Mu‘tamid, set out to kill him; he managed to do so in 270/883 and sent his head to Baghdad.

132 See Lessons Thirty-Six to Thirty-Eight.

133 Qāhir was deposed and his eyes were gouged out; he remained in that state until he died in 339/950. In a remarkable twist of fate, this Caliph, who had been an oppressive tyrant when he was in power, was thereafter to be found begging from the people and saying: “Be charitable towards me, for you have known me.”

134 His reign also saw the emergence of the Ikhshidid Dynasty (Ikhshidiyyah) in Egypt, at the hands of Muḥammad ibn Ṭughj al-Ikhshidī, in 323/935. They persisted until the Fāṭimids penetrated Egypt in 358/969.

135 After being deposed, he survived until his death in the month of Sha‘bān, 357/968.

136 See the discussion of the Būyid Dynasty in Lesson Thirty-One.

137 Tarsus (Ṭarsūs): a city on the frontiers of Syria, between Antioch (Anṭakīyah), Aleppo and the Byzantine Empire.

Mopsuestia (Muṣīṣah): a city on the coast of Jayḥān (Ceyhan), a Syrian frontier town between Antioch and Byzantium, near Tarsus.

138 Miyārfārqīn: the most famous city in Diyarbakir.

139 He died in 364/974, during the reign of his son, Ṭā’i’.

Lesson Twenty-Nine

24. ‘ABD AL-KARĪM AṬ-ṬĀ’Y^ᶜ (REIGNED: 363/974–381/991)

Ṭā’i^ᶜ was appointed as Caliph after the death of his father¹⁴⁰, Muṭī^ᶜ.

During his reign, the Subuktukīn Dynasty¹⁴¹ emerged in Ghaznah¹⁴²; both its chief and governors were from the Subuktukīn family. This dynasty had a major role in the conquest of India and the introduction of Islām there.

Ṭā’i^ᶜ was deposed in 381/991¹⁴³.

25. AḤMAD AL-QĀDIR IBN IṢHĀQ IBN AL-MUQTADIR (REIGNED: 487/991–422/1031)

Allegiance was sworn to Qādir after his uncle, Ṭā’i^ᶜ was deposed.

His reign saw the Subuktukīn Dynasty extend their rule as far as Khorasan, which they took control of.

Meanwhile, in 389/999, the Sāmānid Dynasty ended in Bukhara, which was taken over by the Turks.

Nevertheless, some pride was restored to the Caliphate under Qādir.

He was noble and forbearing, loved and commanded what is good, forbade evil and hated those who perpetrated it.

26. ‘ABDULLĀH AL-QĀ’IM (REIGNED: 422/1031–467/1075)

Allegiance was sworn to Qā'im following the death of his father, Qādir.

Under Qā'im, the state of governance and security worsened greatly and there no longer existed any authority capable of punishing miscreants and bandits, since Būyid power had severely diminished.

His reign also saw the emergence of the Saljūq Family Dynasty¹⁴⁴, the first of whose famous members was Ṭughril Bak Muḥammad ibn Mikā'il Ibn Saljūq.

In 447/1055, the Saljūqs took control of Baghdad. With that, the Būyid Dynasty fell and ended as if it had never been.

One interesting historical fact is that Tughril Bak became an inlaw of the Caliph by marrying his daughter. No previous ruler had dared to make such a request, despite the power which they had held.

During Qā'im's caliphate, a great battle took place between the Saljūq Sultan, Alp Arslān, and the Byzantine Empereor at Ahlat¹⁴⁵. The latter set out with a great force and was met by Arslān and his small but loyal army, who fought them relentlessly until they had defeated the Byzantines and captured their Emperor. His ransom was 1,500,000 dinars and the freedom of every captive held in Byzantium. The Sultan then agreed a fifty-year truce with him and sent him back to his land, accompanied by troops who delivered him to a place of security. The Sultan himself accompanied him for a league of the journey.

27. ABDULLĀH AL-MUQTADĪ IBN MUḤAMMAD IBN AL-QĀ'IM (REIGNED: 467/1075–487/1094)

Allegiance was sworn to Muqtadī following the death of his grandfather, Qā'im, who had no other male descendant.

During Muqtadī's caliphate, Antioch was retaken from the Byzantine Empire by Sulaymān Ibn Qatlamāsh, ruler of Konya, after it had been in Byzantine hands since 358/969.

In 484/1091, the Europeans captured Sicily from Muslim rule.

Muqtadī died at the beginning of 487/1094.

28. AḤMAD AL-MUSTAẒHIR (REIGNED: 487/1094–512/1118)

Allegiance was sworn to Mustazhir following the death of his father, Muqtadī. His reign saw the emergence of the dynasty headed by Muḥammad ibn Anushtakīn, whose title was: Khwarezm Shāh and who first established his power in Khwarezm.

During Muqtadī's caliphate, the Crusades began in earnest and European forces advanced to Muslim lands, taking Antioch and then Ma'arrat an-Nu'mān.

In 492/1099, they took Jerusalem¹⁴⁶.

In every city which the Crusaders conquered, they inflicted terrible torture upon the Muslims, killing and insulting without any respect for agreements or guarantees of protection.

All this went on while the Muslim Amīrs were engrossed in their own mutual strife, which increased daily.

The people of Egypt resisted them time and again, sometimes making some gains and sometimes suffering defeat.

In 497/1104, the Europeans took the Syrian towns of Jubayl (Byblos) and 'Akkā (Acre), followed by the Fortress of Afāmiyā¹⁴⁷.

In 503/1110 they took Tripoli and Beirut (Bayrūt), followed by Jubayl, Baniyās and then Sidon (Ṣidā). In 505/1112 the Sultan

dispatched troops to fight them. The sides had alternating success.

Mustazhir bi'llah died in 512/1118.

29. AL-FADL AL-MUSTARSHID (REIGNED: 512/1118–529/1135)

Allegiance was sworn to Mustarshid following the death of his father, who had appointed him as his successor. During his caliphate, the Europeans captured Tyre (Şūr), while the Muslims there disputed and warred amongst themselves, each hoping to gain ascendancy over the others and their dominion.

The Caliph Mustarshid was assassinated in 529/1135 by the Saljūq Sultan, Masʿūd, during a battle between them.

30. AL-MANŞŪR AR-RĀSHID (REIGNED: 529/1135–530/1136)

Allegiance was sworn to Rāshid following the death of his father, Mustarshid.

His reign was short-lived; he was deposed in 530/1136.

31. MUḤAMMAD AL-MUQTAFĪ (REIGNED: 530/1136–555/1160)

Allegiance was sworn to Muqtafī after his nephew, Rāshid, was deposed.

During his caliphate, Atābenk Zankī—the father of Maḥmūd Nūr ad-Dīn, who was praised for his role in the wars against the Crusaders—became increasingly powerful, from his base in Mosul and its environs. He was also the teacher of Şalāḥ ad-Dīn Yūsuf Ibn Ayyūb.

The dominion of Nūr ad-Dīn extended over most cities of the Arabian Gulf and Syria. The rule of Maḥmūd Nūr ad-Dīn began in 546/1151, after his father was killed. He managed to retrieve much of the territory which the Europeans had seized from the Muslims.

Also during Muqtafi's reign, the Subuktukīn Dynasty came to an end.

Muqtafi died in 555/1160.

32. YŪSUF AL-MUSTANJID IBN AL-MUQTAFĪ (REIGNED 555/1160–566/1170)

Allegiance was sworn to Mustanjid following the death of his father, Muqtafi.

During his caliphate, the Fāṭimid Dynasty in Egypt came to an end. It was taken over by Asad ad-Dīn Shīrkūh, the deputy of Maḥmūd Nūr ad-Dīn.

When Asad ad-Dīn died, he was succeeded by Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn Yūsuf ibn Ayyūb, head of the Ayyūbid Dawlah.

Mustanjid died in 566/1170.

33. AL-ḤASAN AL-MUSTAḌĪ' (REIGNED: 566/1170– 575/1180)

Allegiance was sworn to Mustaḍī' following the death of his father, Mustanjid.

During his reign, Nūr ad-Dīn died and was succeeded by Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn Yūsuf, who continued his struggle and increased his lasting influence. It was he who took back Jerusalem from the Europeans, as well as many of the Muslim cities which had been in their possession.

Mustaḍī' died in 575/1180.

34. AḤMAD AN-NĀṢIR (REIGNED: 575/1180–622/1225)

Allegiance was sworn to Nāṣir after the death of his father, Mustaḍī'. Under Nāṣir, the dominion of Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn extended significantly and his power increased greatly. He reconquered Jerusalem in 583/1187. There was a manifest difference between the Muslim leader and the European leader, in the way that Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn behaved with the inhabitants of the places he conquered, in terms of keeping agreements, noble character and forgiveness—in contrast to the behaviour of the Europeans when they were in the ascendancy.

Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn died during the caliphate of Nāṣir, in 589/1193.

Also during his reign, the Tatars [i.e. the Mongols] set out from their territory to invade Muslim lands.

Nāṣir died in 622/1225, making him the longest-reigning of the 'Abbāsid Caliphs. In fact, he was the longest-reigning of all Muslim rulers, except the 'Alid Caliph, Mustanṣir bi'llāh, who ruled for sixty years; however, he was appointed at the age of seven.

Nāṣir led an infamous life and oppressed the populace. During his caliphate, Iraq was destroyed and its people dispersed, while he seized their possessions and property. It is also said that he was responsible for fuelling the Tatar's desire for Muslim lands, which he wrote to them about. This is the great calamity which dwarfs every major sin.

35. MUḤAMMAD AẒ-ZĀHIR (REIGNED: 622/1225– 623/1226)

Allegiance was sworn to Ẓāhir following the death of his father, Nāṣir.

His reign was short-lived; he died in 623/1226.

140 In fact, he was appointed during his father's lifetime, after he had been deposed, as mentioned previously.

141 For more on this dynasty, see Lesson Thirty-Three.

142 Ghaznah: a great city on the edge of Khorasan and its border with India.

143 He survived after being deposed, until he died in 393/1003.

144 See further information on this dynasty in Lesson, Thirty-Two.

145 This is the battle known as the Battle of Menzikert, which took place on 7 Dhū'l-Qā'idah, 463/1071.

146 In doing so, they killed 90,000 Muslims in a massacre the terror of which was enough to turn children's hair white.

147 Afāmiyā was a fortress city in Syria and one of the districts of Homs.

Lesson Thirty

36. AL-MANŞŪR AL-MUSTANŞIR BI'LLĀH (REIGNED: 623/1226–640/1242)

Allegiance was sworn to Mustanşir following the death of his father, Zāhir.

During his caliphate, control of Jerusalem reverted to the Europeans by agreement in 626/1229, due to disagreement in the family of Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn al-Ayyūbī.

Mustanşir lived a virtuous life and was just to the populace. He was responsible for the construction of the Mustanşiriyyah Madrasah on the eastern bank of the Tigris, next to the Caliph's residence, to which he allocated generous endowments as a form of charity.

37. MUSTA'ŞIM IBN AL-MUSTANŞIR (REIGNED: 640/1242–656/1258)

Allegiance was sworn to Musta'şim following the death of his father, Mustanşir.

It was in his hands that the 'Abbāsīd Dynasty came to an end. His vizier, Ibn al-'Alqami, was a Rāfiḍite and pro-'Alid who disliked the 'Abbāsīds. Hoping to transfer the caliphate to those he supported, he sent a message to the Tatars, fuelling their desire for Baghdad; they had already invaded all the Persian lands, Transoxania and elsewhere. The vizier arranged the situation so that there was no resistance. Hence, the Tatars arrived, seized Baghdad, killed the Caliph and perpetrated destruction on a scale never before seen in history. They killed the majority of the city's inhabitants, showing no

mercy to the young or old, and destroyed its great books. Furthermore, Ibn al-ʿAlqamī never saw his design come to fruition. Instead, he was humiliated and then killed. Such is the recompense of traitors.

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ʿABBĀSID DYNASTY

From the outset, the ʿAbbāsid Dynasty was advocated by clients (*mawālī*) from Khorasan and Persia. They were the first to raise its banner and, as such, they provided its greatest amīrs and leaders, including Abū Muslim al-Khurāsānī, the Barmakids (Banū Barmak) and others. These were dominated by the authority of the first caliphs, who would bring ruthless action to bear on them if they perceived them to have grown powerful. However, as the *mawālī* increased in number, they became impossible to control; the caliphate fell into their hands and there was no law controlling them. This was the beginning of the decline of the dynasty—after the death of the eighth ʿAbbāsid Caliph, Muʿtaṣim.

The dynasty presided over an empire of knowledge, since it was in this era that a fusion took place between Arabs and non-Arab Persians, Byzantines and others. This involved the translation of books in various fields.

Translation was undertaken by skilled Muslim and non-Muslim writers, so that the sphere of knowledge widened. This progress was most greatly felt in the fields of medicine, philosophy and physiology.

As for the sciences of the Arabic language, numerous renowned scholars grew famous for their excellence therein, such as Khalīl, Sībawayh and those grammarians who followed in their footsteps.

With regards to the Arabic language, it is possible to speak of progress in that field without constraint, since the caliphs gave abundant and generous gifts to those who preserved it and its literature.

One such poet would earn for his poetic skill more than a vizier would for his ministerial duties; likewise, one such transmitter would earn for his sound memorisation and recitation what others like him did not dream of.


The likes of Aṣma'ī and Abū Nuwās enjoyed wealth and gifts which we wonder at when they are mentioned, since they were worth tens of thousands of dinars. In such circumstances, it was inevitable that the Arabic language would be promoted and in demand.

Songs were also extremely well-rewarded at that time and good singers possessed huge fortunes. These songs were not full of the foolishness and obscenities which characterise the songs of today; rather, singers were masters of creativity who gave performances of rousing and moralistic poetry. Rarely did they sing poetry of love or eroticism, in contrast to the songs sung today, which have no comprehensible meaning beyond obscenities.

When song is elevated, so too are morals; likewise, when song is debased, so too are morals.

In the realm of religious sciences, jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and jurists grew in importance and the names of the four independent-jurist (*mujtahid*) Imāms gained renown: Imām Abū Ḥanīfah an-Nu'mān (d. 150/767), Imām Mālik ibn Anas (d. 179/795), Imām Muḥammad ibn Idrīs ash-Shāfi'ī (d. 204/820, in Egypt) and Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241/855); as did those learned Imāms who succeeded them.

It was at this time that the great books of *fiqh* were written.

In addition, the books of rigorously authenticated (*ṣaḥīḥ*) hadīths of the Messenger of Allāh  were compiled, such as the *ṣaḥīḥ*

collections of Imām Bukhārī and Imām Muslim amongst others.

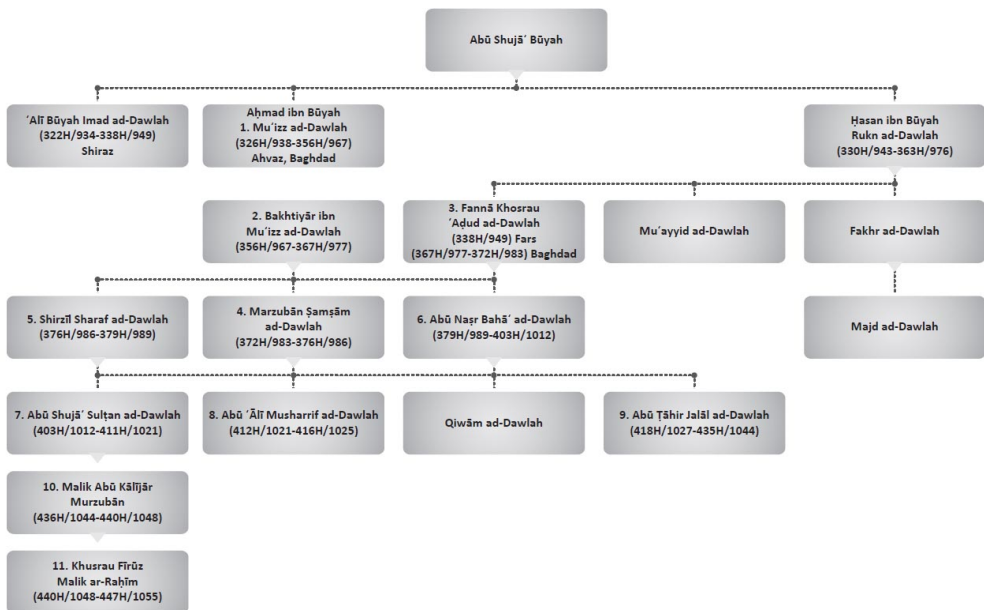
Many of the books of Qur'ānic exegesis (*tafsīr*) were also written during this period.

In short, the religious scholars had a major impact on every field of religious science, most of which occurred during the first half of the history of the 'Abbāsīd Dynasty.

In the second half of their history, on the other hand, their aspirations weakened, due to the differences which emerged amongst the amīrs, and the malice and rancour which overwhelmed them. No longer did they give consideration to the progress of learning, nor to supporting the scholars. As a result, the lamp of scholarship was nearly snuffed out. Such would have been the case, had Allāh, glory be to Him, not aided them from time to time by means of a leader who loved religious knowledge (*‘ilm*); such leaders would go to great lengths to support them in resolving matters of knowledge and helping those who sought it.

The 'Abbāsīd Dynasty, during its first century, was the wealthiest state on Earth. At this time, all Muslim territories were under 'Abbāsīd rule and they were in complete control of them. When taxes came in, they would spend much of them on the needy, redistributing wealth amongst the individuals of the Ummah so that poverty and need were reduced. However, once the border lands started to gain autonomy and attackers emerged, they began to be overcome by poverty, until this was actually the case. Eventually, there was nothing left for the caliph but to be informed of events.

The 'Abbāsīd banner was black, as were their turbans and cloaks, which was also the official clothing of the general populace. This was because the Prophet ﷺ had entered Makkah on the day of its Conquest wearing a black turban, followed by Faḍl ibn al-'Abbās [ﷺ]



Principal Rulers of the Būyid Dynasty
(dates of rule in Baghdad unless otherwise stated)

Lesson Thirty-One

DYNASTIES AND EMIRATES WHICH EMERGED DURING THE ʿABBĀSID ERA

Many of the dynasties which held kingdoms or caliphates during the ʿAbbāsid era were mentioned previously in the account of their rule. This chapter will now discuss these dynasties in summary: how and where they emerged and how they came to an end.

Those who achieved autonomous rule during the ʿAbbāsid era were many. Of these, some were short-lived, while others bequeathed their dominion to their descendants after them; it is the state and fate of this latter group which this chapter is concerned with.

In the east, during the ʿAbbāsid era, there arose four great dynasties, three of which took control of Baghdad and became its defacto rulers. This was achieved through the power which they derived externally from the caliph, such that they seemed to act at will in his name.

The legitimate power lay with the Caliphate, while the actual ruling power lay with the ruler subjugating the Caliph.

This is a form of Islamic government which is a historical aberration and was a cause of its weakness and diminishment and the loss of its splendour and standing.

The three aforementioned dynasties will be discussed in the order in which they took control of Baghdad, followed by the fourth.

THE BŪYIDS (BANŪ BŪYAH)

The dynasty was established by three brothers from Deylam¹⁴⁸: ‘Alī, Ḥasan and Aḥmad, sons of Abū Shujā‘ Būyah.

The eldest and ablest of them was ‘Alī, who was Governor of Kurj¹⁴⁹ for Mardawīj ad-Daylamī, one of the conquerors of Rey. He was liked by those whom he governed, since he treated them well. He also craved greatness and standing and therefore went to Isfahan and took it, despite having few troops. When word reached Mardawīj, he feared the consequences and therefore sent a force to take ‘Alī unawares. However, the latter learnt of this, so he left Isfahan for Arjan, which he also took. Here, he extracted revenue which increased his strength.

In 322/934, ‘Alī took control of Shiraz. Those whom he defeated, he would treat well and with justice.

Once he had established himself in Shiraz, he wrote to the Caliph, Ṭā’i‘, informing him that he was obedient to him; so the Caliph sent him a commission of governorship.

In 326/938, Aḥmad ibn Būyah seized Ahvaz, taking ‘Askar Makram and Shustar.

In 330/943, Ḥasan ibn Būyah advanced to Rey and seized it.

In this way, the three brothers built up a dominion, which they divided between them, giving the title of Commander of the Commanders (*Amīr al-Umarā’*) to the eldest brother, ‘Alī.

In 334/945, Aḥmad ibn Būyah advanced to Baghdad and captured it. He met with the then Caliph, Mustakfī bi’llāh, who put him in charge of the land tax and the levy on wealth and gave him the title: Mu‘izz ad-Dawlah.

To his brother ‘Alī, the Caliph gave the title: ‘Imād ad-Dawlah, while their brother Ḥasan was given the title: Rukn ad-Dawlah.

Furthermore, he commanded that these titles, in addition to their *kunya*hs, should be inscribed on dinars and dirhams.

This dynasty is of concern to the reader in so far as it is directly related to the ‘Abbāsid Caliphate in Baghdad. Discussion of the Būyids will therefore be confined to those eleven of its leaders who had control over Baghdad, and will not consider others who separated from them and ruled autonomously in one region or another. Their power was weak and this was arranged by those Būyids who held sway in Baghdad.¹⁵⁰

1. MU‘IZZ AD-DAWLAH

Mu‘izz ad-Dawlah remained as ruler of Baghdad, deputising for his brothers, until he died in 356/967.

2. BAKHTIYĀR IBN MU‘IZZ AD-DAWLAH

He ruled Baghdad after his father, as his father had instructed in his will.

His father had commanded him to obey his uncle, Rukn ad-Dawlah, and seek his advice in everything which he did; and to obey his cousin, ‘Aḍud ad-Dawlah, because he was older and more politically astute. ‘Aḍud ad-Dawlah had governed Fārs since the death of ‘Imād ad-Dawlah, as he had no male heir.

Mu‘izz ad-Dawlah also instructed his son, Bakhtiyār, to treat his troops well. However, Bakhtiyār did none of what he had been instructed, but instead devoted himself to pleasure and play. He mistreated those who were loyal to him and expelled the Daylamite chiefs from his dominion, out of greed for their estates and wealth and the wealth of those connected with them. Thus, he was corrupted and, as is natural in such circumstances, discord prevailed and the safety of the populace and security of their wealth diminished. In response, Bakhtiyār’s cousin, ‘Aḍud ad-Dawlah, came to Baghdad,

apprehended him and took control of the city. However, he was reprimanded for this by his father, Rukn ad-Dawlah, Amīr of Amīrs, who ordered him to reinstate Bakhtiyār; ʿAḍud ad-Dawlah did so.

In 636/976, Rukn ad-Dawlah died, leaving his dominion to his son, ʿAḍud ad-Dawlah. The latter thus expanded his rule and there was no longer anyone to contest his actions. He advanced to Baghdad, took control of the city and was proclaimed as its ruler. As such, he was the first of the Būyids to be proclaimed as ruler from the pulpits of Baghdad. Indeed, the Būyids were the first to be acknowledged in this way. Bakhtiyār was expelled from Baghdad in 367/977.

3. FANNĀ KHUSRAW ʿAḍUD AD-DAWLAH

He assumed power after his cousin, Bakhtiyār, had been deposed. He then proceeded to capture Mosul from the Ḥamdānids (Banū Ḥamdān), followed by Miyāfāriqīn (Silvan), Āmid (Amida)¹⁵¹ and other areas of Diyār Bakr. ʿAḍud ad-Dawlah made a positive contribution to the rebuilding of Baghdad and restoration of some of its prestige, following its near devastation as a result of the continuous turmoil there.

He was wise and learned, politically astute, of sound judgement, highly revered, high-minded and shrewd. He loved virtue and the virtuous, gave generously when appropriate and withheld when necessary, always bearing in mind the consequences of any matter.

One of his most outstanding qualities was that he never oppressed anyone unless it was in recompense for a similar action; neither did he allow intercessions to reach those who were outside the intercessor's sphere of influence or concern.

For example, it is related about him that a colonel in his army interceded on behalf of some upright person, to enable him to appear before the judge and have his honourable record as a witness attested to. ‘Aḏud ad-Dawlah told him: “This is not your affair. Rather, what concerns you is to ask for more amīrs or that a soldier should be promoted, and other matters relating to them. As for the testimony of a witness and whether it is accepted, this is for the judge to decide, not for us or you to intervene in. When the judiciary know that a person qualifies for his testimony to be accepted, they will do so without intercession.”

‘Aḏud ad-Dawlah constructed amenities in every city, such as hospitals, bridges and other facilities for public welfare. However, at the end of his reign, he introduced a land tax and duties on livestock and other goods. He also prohibited the production of ice and silk and made them private business. At this time, he used any means to obtain access to wealth.

He died in 372/983.

4. MARZUBĀN ṢAMṢĀM AD-DAWLAH

He came to power after the death of his father, ‘Aḏud ad-Dawlah.

His rule lasted only three years. Then his brother, Sharaf ad-Dawlah, marched against him from Ahvaz, imprisoned him and seized control of his territory in 376/986.

5. SHIRZĪL SHARAF AD-DAWLAH

He assumed power in Baghdad after the imprisonment of his brother, Ṣamṣām ad-Dawlah.

One shameful act which he committed was to gouge out his brother’s eyes after imprisoning him.

He did not long enjoy the dominion which had led him to commit such a despicable act, since he died in 379/989.

6. ABŪ NAṢR BAHĀ' AD-DAWLAH

He came to power in Baghdad after the death of his brother, Sharaf ad-Dawlah.

He deposed the Caliph, Ṭā'ī', and other rulers recognised his overall authority.

In 380/990, covetous of Ṭā'ī's wealth, he captured the Caliph in the following manner: He sent him a message asking for permission to renew his contract with him. When Ṭā'ī' sat down, a Daylamite entered as if to kiss his hand. Instead, he pulled the Caliph from his seat, while the latter cried, "Indeed, we are for Allāh, and to Him do we return!" He called for help but none came.

Ash-Sharīf ar-Raḍī was amongst those who were present. He left, saying:

This evening, I pity one I used to envy;

Honour and shame have come close to meeting.

A sight which in good times amused me

now in troubled times how close I come to weeping.

Regaining pride in power is far from me,

And all the Sultans' striving lost on me.

Bahā' ad-Dawlah ruled Iraq for twenty-four years.

He died in 403/1012.

7. ABŪ SHUJĀ' SULTĀN AD-DAWLAH

He came to power after the death of his father, Bahā' ad-Dawlah. During his rule, the power of the Daylamite dynasty [i.e. the Būyids] diminished in Baghdad. Many aspired to usurp their power and miscreants and corrupt individuals abounded.

In 411/1021, there was dissension amongst the troops against Sulṭān ad-Dawlah, so he removed to Wāsiṭ, leaving behind his brother, Musharrif ad-Dawlah. The latter took control of Baghdad and although Sulṭān ad-Dawlah later tried to regain his lost dominion, he was unable to do so.

8. ABŪ 'ALĪ MUSHARRIF AD-DAWLAH

Musharrif ad-Dawlah became established as ruler of Iraq after his brother, Sulṭān ad-Dawlah. He was proclaimed as ruler there at the end of the month of Muḥarram, 412/1021. However, he remained in power for a mere five years; for he died in 412/1025.

He was just and led a virtuous life.

He was aged twenty-three when he died.

With the death of Musharrif ad-Dawlah, Baghdad was left without a ruler. For two years, it was the scene of increasing corruption, until its army called upon Abū Ṭāhir Jalāl ad-Dawlah.

9. ABŪ ṬĀHIR JALĀL AD-DAWLAH

He entered Baghdad in 418/1027 and was met by the Caliph, Qādir, who came out to receive him. The Caliph appointed Jalāl ad-Dawlah as his deputy and pledged his confidence in him, and the latter established himself in Baghdad.

During his reign, miscreants ran rampant in Baghdad, seizing people's wealth day and night unimpeded. The ruler, Jalāl ad-Dawlah, was powerless against them, since his commands were not

obeyed; and the Caliph was even weaker. Bedouin spread throughout the city, plundering districts and robbing people on the roads.

Jalāl ad-Dawlah died in 435/1044.

10. MALIK ABŪ KĀLĪJĀR AL-MARZUBĀN

He was appointed by the army after the death of his father, Jalāl ad-Dawlah, and was proclaimed as ruler from the pulpits in Baghdad in 436/1044.

It was he who had the city wall of Shiraz built and oversaw its construction. He made it twelve thousand cubits in circumference and eight cubits high, with eleven gates.

During his reign, prices increased severely, to the extent that people in Baghdad resorted to eating from animal carcasses, while the markets were empty of edible produce.

Abū Kālījār died in 440/1048.

11. KHUSRAW FĪRŪZ

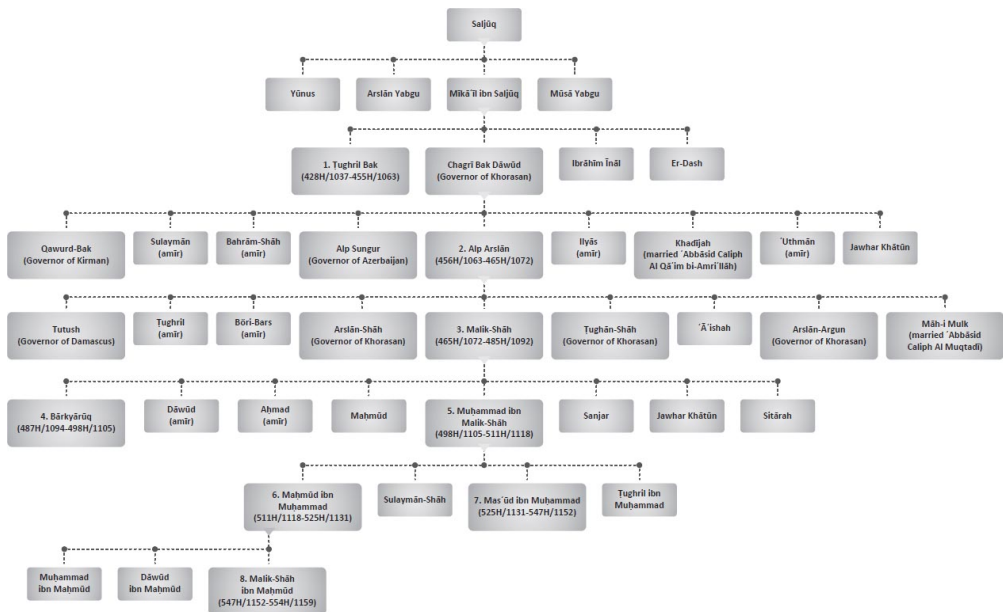
He was appointed by the army in Baghdad following the death of his father, Abū Kālījār. He requested of the Caliph that he confer on him the title: al-Malik ar-Raḥīm, to which the latter grudgingly consented.

He was the last of the Būyid rulers of Iraq. With his death, they were effaced without a trace, at the hands of the Saljūq Sultan, Ṭughril Bak.

The Būyid Dynasty was of no benefit to the ‘Abbāsīd Caliphate or to the Muslim populace. Instead, the Caliphate became increasingly weak, security diminished and lawlessness was allowed to prevail.

On the other hand, the Būyids did carry out some good works within the city, in terms of constructing hospitals and schools.

In addition, the scholars of Baghdad and Persia during their era were of great benefit to the Muslims.



The Saljūq Dynasty

148 A region of Persia

149 A town in Rey.

150 See figure: Principal Rulers of the Būyid Dynasty.

151 Miyāfāriqīn and Āmid were two of the greatest, most important and famous cities in Diyar Bakir.

Lesson Thirty-Two

THE SALJŪQ DYNASTY

This dynasty was formed by two men: Ṭughril Bak Muḥammad and his brother, Chaghri Bak Dāwūd, the sons of Mīkā'il ibn Saljūq.¹⁵²

They were of Turkish origin, from Turkistan. Their grandfather, Saljūq, had adopted Islām and migrated to the Muslim lands of Transoxania with those Turkish fighters who followed him. He continued to roam, seeking out a refuge for himself and his followers; this process was ongoing when Saljūq died, followed by Mīkā'il. Leadership of their clan fell to the latter's two sons, Ṭughril Bak and Dāwūd. Together they endured hardships and difficulties at the hands of the Ghaznavids (Subuktukīniyyah) and other regional powers and eventually conquered Khorasan. Dāwūd was proclaimed from the pulpit in Merv in 428/1037, when he was given the title: King of Kings (Malik al-Mulūk). Ṭughril Bak entered Nishapur and placated Shādhīyākh¹⁵³. He was proclaimed as its ruler and given the title: Great Sultan (as-Sulṭān al-ʿAẓīm). Then, after great difficulties, they conquered Balkh and Herat.

In 433/1041 Ṭughril Bak captured Gorgan and Tabaristan.

The following year, he took Khwarezm, then Rey and the mountain regions. Thus, his dominion was greatly increased; for he had taken half of the Ghaznavid territory and most of that of the Būyids.

The Būyid Dynasty was at that time entrenched in the urban centres, so Ṭughril Bak set about reducing its border lands by gradually seizing them.

In 446/1054 he took Azerbaijan.

By 447/1055, his power extended as far as Baghdad, which he took from the last of the Būyids, al-Malik ar-Raḥīm. He was proclaimed as ruler of Baghdad in Ramaḍān. As such, he was the foremost Saljūq leader.

The Caliph, Qā'im bi-Amri'llāh, became related to the Saljūqs by marriage, marrying the daughter of Ṭughril Bak's brother, Dāwūd.

In 451/1060, Chagrī Bak Dāwūd, brother of Ṭughril Bak and ruler of Khorasan, died, appointing his son, Alp Arslān, as his successor.

Ṭughril Bak himself became an in-law of the Caliph by marrying his daughter.

He had some excellent qualities, although some aspects of his character were despicable.

As for the former, he was intelligent, forbearing, one of the most tolerant people and one of the best at concealing what was in his heart, as well as being generous.

As for the latter, he was an oppressive and harsh tyrant. His soldiers used to seize people's wealth and were free to do so day and night.

He died in 455/1063.

2. ALP ARSLĀN MUḤAMMAD

After the death of Ṭughril Bak, the affairs of rule passed to his nephew, Alp Arslān, son of Dāwūd, who was proclaimed as ruler in Baghdad in 456/1063. He was victorious in his military campaigns, capturing much of the Kurg territories [i.e. modern-day Georgia], which he refused to withdraw from until he had reached an agreement with their king that they would pay the *jizyah* tax. He also engaged in a colossal battle with the Byzantine Empire in the region of Ahlat¹⁵⁴, in which he defeated them despite his small force and

captured the Byzantine Emperor, whom he later released in exchange for a ransom.

Alp Arslān was noble and just and refused to listen to slander. His dominion expanded greatly. He was merciful and kind to the poor and used to give much in charity; during Ramaḍān, he would donate ten thousand dinars. Confiscation of property never took place in any of the lands which he ruled; rather, he was content to extract the basic taxes from his subjects, which he did in two stages, out of kindness to them.

Once, some slanderers wrote some calumnies about his vizier, Niẓām al-Mulk¹⁵⁵. Alp Arslān delivered them to him, saying: “If they are truthful, improve your character and reform your situation; if they are lying, forgive them their lapse and give them a task that will divert them from slandering people.”

When his virtuous way of life and adherence to contracts grew renowned amongst other rulers, they willingly pledged obedience and compliance to him, having previously refused to accept his suzerainty, presenting themselves before him from the furthest parts of Transoxania to the furthest parts of Syria.

He was extremely concerned to ensure that his troops refrained from seizing the wealth of the populace. On one occasion, he learnt that one of his private military slaves (*mamlūk*) had stripped a farmer of his waist-wrapper. He apprehended the *mamlūk* and had him crucified. Thus, people were prevented from interfering with the property of others.

Alp Arslān was assassinated in 465/1072.

3. MALIK-SHĀH

He assumed power after the assassination of his father, Alp Arslān, and entrusted the affairs of state to his father's vizier, Nizām al-Mulk, telling him: "I resign all affairs, great and small, to you; for you are as my father."

He was praiseworthy in his capability, bravery and virtuous way of life. Once, a frail woman sought help from him, so he stopped and spoke with her. When one of his secretaries moved her along, Malik-Shāh rebuked him for it, saying: "I only employ you [to serve] such as her, for nobles and amīrs have no need of you."

In 466/1073, the Caliph wrote an agreement conferring rule upon the Sultan, Malik-Shāh.

In 485/1092, his vizier, Nizām al-Mulk al-Ḥasan ibn 'Alī, died. His assassination had been arranged by Sultan Malik-Shāh himself, due to the excessive power of the vizier, who had ultimate authority. This act contained the ruination of Malik-Shāh.

Nizām al-Mulk had been one of the wisest and shrewdest viziers the world had known.

When Abū'l-Qāsim al-Qushayrī¹⁵⁶ and Abū'l-Ma'ālī al-Juwaynī¹⁵⁷ came to see him, he would stand to greet them and then sit on his cushion; and when Abū 'Alī al-Fārmadī¹⁵⁸ entered, he would stand to greet him and then seat him in his place before sitting in front of him. He was asked about this and replied: "Whenever these [first] two and their like come to see me, they praise me for attributes which I do not possess and what they say increases my vanity and pride. This Shaykh, on the other hand, reminds me of my faults and the wrong that I commit, so that I feel contrition and desist from such behaviour."

It was Nizām al-Mulk who built the Nizāmiyyah Madrasah in Baghdad.

It was Malik-Shāh who built the mosque known as the Sultan's Mosque in Baghdad. Its direction of prayer (*qiblah*) was set by his astronomer, Bahrām, and a group of expert astronomers.

His reign was the high-point of the Saljūq Dynasty's rule.

His realm expanded greatly, such that he was recognised as ruler from the borders of China to the far edge of Syria, from one end of Muslim territory to the other. The Byzantine Emperors paid him the *jizyah* tax and there was no issue that he neglected. His days were a time of justice, peace and security, in which cities prospered and provisions were plentiful.

He died in 485/1092.

4. BĀRKYĀRŪQ

After the death of Malik-Shāh there were three rivals for power:

One of these was his younger son, Maḥmūd, who was five years old and controlled by his mother and one of his father's viziers.

Another was his eldest son, Bārkyārūq.

Finally, there was his brother, Malik-Shāh Tutush ibn Alp Arslān, the ruler of Damascus.

After much difficulty, Bārkyārūq was established in power and proclaimed as ruler in Baghdad in 487/1094.

However, his rule was not absolute, since his brother, Muḥammad, contested him for it. There followed consecutive wars between them, in which they had alternating successes. This contention did not end until the death of Bārkyārūq in 498/1105.

5. MUḤAMMAD IBN MALIK-SHĀH

After the death of Bārkyārūq, Muḥammad advanced to Baghdad, where he established himself in power.

During this period, the members of the Saljūq family increased in number and many had private kingdoms in Syria, Aleppo and Anatolia, independent of the suzerainty of Baghdad. Thus, their power was dissipated, which is what enabled the Crusaders to capture many Muslim lands.

Muḥammad died in 511/1118. He was just and led a virtuous life. He imposed customs and taxes on all of the lands which he controlled.

6. MAḤMŪD IBN MUḤAMMAD

He came to power after the death of his father, who had appointed him as his successor.

His reign was short-lived, however, as his uncle, Sanjar, desirous of his realm, set out to attack him. Maḥmūd advanced towards him and the two forces met in the vicinity of Rey. Sanjar was victorious and captured Rey.

During Maḥmūd's reign, Nūr ad-Dīn ash-Shahīd, founder of the Nūriyyah Dynasty in Aleppo, and others, became increasingly powerful.

Maḥmūd died 525/1131.

7. MAS'ŪD IBN MUḤAMMAD

After the death of Maḥmūd, his father's viziers agreed to appoint his son, Dāwūd. However, he was contended for power by his uncle, Mas'ūd ibn Muḥammad, who advanced to Baghdad and captured the city with the help of 'Imād ad-Dīn Zankī, the father of Nūr ad-Dīn.

An estrangement occurred between Mas'ūd and the Caliph, Mustarshid, which led to a war between them, in which the Caliph was defeated and killed.

Sultan Mas'ūd died in 547/1152. With his death ended the good fortune of the Saljūq House, after which it had no pillar to support it.

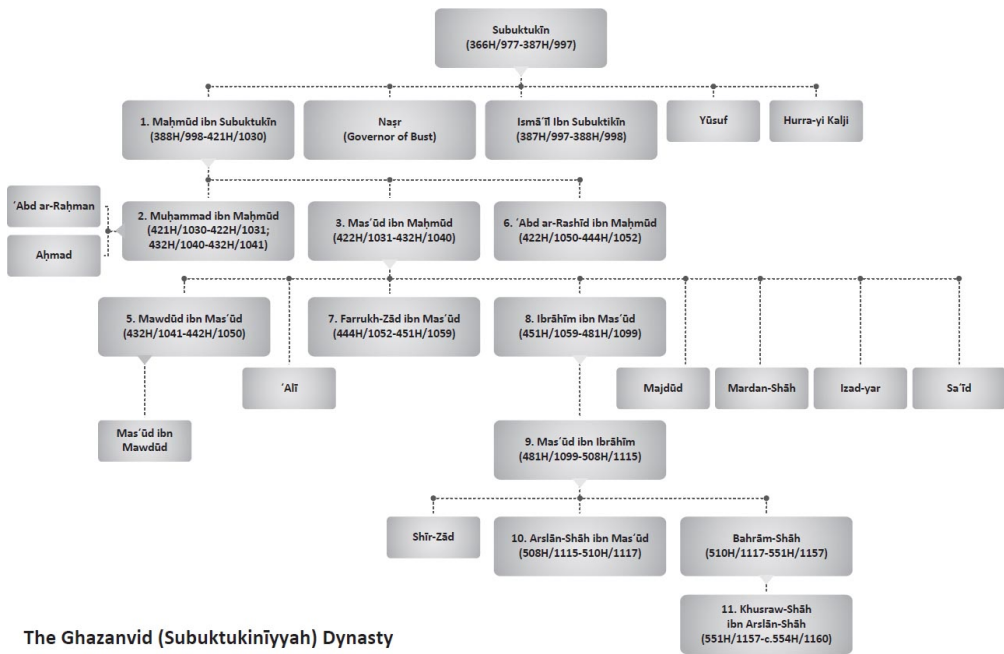
8. MALIK-SHĀH IBN MAḤMŪD

He came to power following the death of his uncle. However, powerful military leaders arrested him and sent for his brother, Muḥammad, to come and assume power. He advanced to Baghdad and captured it but died in 554/1159. After his death, the family were at odds regarding who should rule. Thus preoccupied, there was no longer any of them capable of defending himself, let alone any territory which he possessed. This was the situation until the dynasty came to an end.

THE LEGACY OF THE SALJŪQ DYNASTY

The dynasty left behind a great legacy in terms of beneficial works in Baghdad and elsewhere, in particular religious schools. During their era, Nizām al-Mulk built the Nizāmiyyah Madrasah in Baghdad, in which the great religious scholars of jurisprudence, ḥadīth, Sufism and philosophy taught. It is enough for a school to have as its teachers: Imām Ghazālī (d. 505/1111)¹⁵⁹, the great philosopher and author of *Iḥyā'Ulūm ad-Dīn*, *Al-Uṣūl* and *Al-Fiqh al-Mufīd*; as well as Abū Ishāq ash-Shīrāzī¹⁶⁰ and other luminary scholars.

However, difference and division are a source of decay and destruction for nations. Hence, when they attacked this dynasty, they effaced it, taking with it these beautiful vestiges of their rule.



152 See figure: The Saljūq Dynasty.


153 A city in Nishapur, the greatest city in Khorasan.

154 This is the battle known as Manzikert, which was referred to on p. 141.

155 Niẓām al-Mulk was Ḥasan ibn Ishāq aṭ-Ṭūsī Abū ‘Alī, whose title was: Qawwām ad-Dīn, Niẓām al-Mulk. He was a resolute, high-minded vizier. He died in 485/1092.

156 ‘Abd al-Karīm ibn Hawāzin ibn Abd al-Malik ibn Ṭalḥah an-Nisābūrī al-Qushayrī, Abū’l-Qāsim Zayn al-Islām. He was the greatest Shaykh of Nishapur during his era, in terms of his asceticism, knowledge and religion. He died in 465/1072.

157 ‘Abd al-Malik ibn ‘Abdullāh ibn Yūsuf ibn Muḥammad al-Juwaynī, Abū’l-Ma‘ālī. He was the Imām of the Two Sanctuaries. He was born in Juwayn and died in 478/1085.

158 Faḍl ibn Muḥammad al-Fārmadī, Abū ‘Alī, the Sufi adept. He was one of the Shaykhs of his era and a companion of Qushayrī and taught Ḥujjat al-Islām Ghazālī. He  died in 447/1055. His surname derives from Fārmad, a village in Tous.

159 Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Ghazālī aṭ-Ṭūṣī, Abū Ḥāmid, Ḥujjat al-Islām, the philosopher, Sufi and author of some two hundred works. He died in 505/1111.

160 Ibrāhīm ibn ‘Alī ibn Yūsuf al-Fīrūz Ābādī ash-Shīrāzī, Abū Ishāq, the learned debater. He was born in Fīrūz (in Persia) and moved to Shiraz; he died in 476/1083.

Lesson Thirty-Three

THE SUBUKTUKĪN FAMILY DYNASTY

Subuktukīn was one of the soldiers of Abū Iṣḥāq, Commander of the army of Ghaznah for the Sāmānids (Sāmāniyyah). He was his senior officer and central to his affair.

When Abū Iṣḥāq died, there were no suitable candidates to replace him from amongst his family and relatives. The army therefore agreed to appoint Subuktukīn as his successor, based on what they knew of his intelligence, religiosity, valour and the full complement of good attributes which he possessed. Hence, he became their leader and treated them in the best manner, skilfully governing their affairs.

When Subuktukīn realised the obedience of the people which his position had brought him, he became ambitious. He advanced to Bust¹⁶¹ and captured it; then he did the same to Quṣḍār¹⁶². After that he invaded India, forcing its ruler to seek a settlement from Subuktukīn, to which the latter agreed.

After that battle, the Afghans and the people of Khalaj¹⁶³ submitted to him.

In 387/997, Subuktukīn died, having ruled for some twenty years.

His son, Ismāʿīl, ruled after him. However, his elder brother, Maḥmūd, who was based in Nishapur, did not accept this. He advanced and fought his brother outside Ghaznah. He defeated Ismāʿīl and assumed power.¹⁶⁴

1. MAḤMŪD IBN SUBUKTUKĪN

He was the first of the family to be given the title of Sultan (Sultān).

In 389/999 he conquered Khorasan¹⁶⁵.

During his reign, the Sāmānid Dynasty came to an end in Transoxania and their state was split between Maḥmūd in the west and the Turk, Īlak Khān, in the east.

Maḥmūd's legacy is praiseworthy:

He invaded India and introduced Islām there. He had previously raided the region numerous times and been victorious.

He invaded and conquered Multan¹⁶⁶.

Recognising his strength and the bravery of his forces, the rulers of India paid him the *jizyah* tax.

He then invaded the province of Ghur, which borders Ghaznah, and conquered its capital. The people of Ghur accepted Islām and made Maḥmūd responsible for instructing them in Islamic Law.

After that, he invaded and conquered Kashmir, whose people also became Muslim.

In addition, Maḥmūd conquered Sistan, Khwarezm, Rey, the mountain territories and Hamadan. Thus, his realm was greatly expanded, stretching from the furthest regions of India to Nishapur.

He was intelligent and pious, benevolent and knowledgeable. Many books were composed for him in various fields of knowledge and scholars came to him from far and wide; he would honour them, give them his attention, present them with gifts and treat them well.

He died in 421/1030. His title was: Yamīn ad-Dawlah.

2. MUḤAMMAD IBN MAḤMŪD

Muḥammad came to power after his father, who had designated him as his suecessor, overlooking his elder brother, Masʿūd. His father's action was reversed, however, and Muḥammad's reign was short-lived, for the military leaders agreed to depose him and then assassinated him. In his place, they appointed his brother Masʿūd, who reached Ghaznah in 422/1031.

3. MASʿŪD IBN MAḤMŪD

Matters transpired in his favour after his brother, Muḥammad, was deposed and he became ruler of Khorasan, Ghaznah, India, Sindh, Sistan, Kerman, Mukran, Rey, Isfahan and the mountain territories. As such, he wielded great authority and was feared.

The Saljūq Dynasty was founded during Masʿūd's reign and fierce wars were fought between them.

4. MUḤAMMAD IBN MAḤMŪD

In 432/1040 a group of military leaders rallied around Muḥammad and persuaded him to seize power from his brother, Masʿūd. He made a pact with them and they fought and defeated the latter, whom Muḥammad had arrested and imprisoned in a castle; later, he had him assassinated.

However, none of this benefitted Muḥammad, since Mawdūd ibn Masʿūd marched against his uncle from Khorasan. Mawdūd fought and overcame Muḥammad, before killing him.

5. MAWDŪD IBN MASʿŪD

Mawdūd assumed power after deposing his uncle, Muḥammad.

During his reign, the Saljūq ruler, Şā'id ad-Dawlah, grew in strength and captured much Ghaznavid territory.

He died in 442/1050.

6. ʿABD AR-RASHĪD IBN MAHMŪD

ʿAbd ar-Rashīd was established in power after the death of his nephew, Mawdūd.

In 444/1052, one of his secretaries, Ṭughril, revolted against him and assassinated him. He had intended to take power himself; however, he was overcome by opponents who killed him and installed:

7. FARRUKH-ZĀD IBN MASʿŪD

He remained in power until his death in 451/1059, after which he was succeeded by his brother.

8. IBRĀHĪM IBN MASʿŪD

Ibrāhīm was just and noble and fought in the way of Allāh, conducting numerous campaigns in India.

He used to say: “Had I been in the place of my father, Masʿūd, after the death of my grandfather, Maḥmūd, I would not have split our realm; however, I am now incapable of regaining the territories which were taken and captured by rulers whose dominions have expanded and whose armies have grown great.”

He died in 481/1099.

9. MASʿŪD IBN IBRĀHĪM

Mas'ūd assumed power after the death of his father, Ibrāhīm. He was an in-law of the Saljūq family through his marriage to the daughter of Alp Arslān.

He died in 508/1115.

10. ARSLĀN-SHĀH IBN MAS'ŪD

Arslān-Shāh assumed power after the death of his father, Mas'ūd. He did so in the most despicable manner: he arrested and killed all his brothers, killed some of them and gouged out the eyes of some—although they had committed no act of disobedience. However, one of his brothers, named Bahrām, managed to escape and fled to the Saljūq Sultan, Sanjar, to seek his help. The latter responded, marching with him, accompanied by a great army, to Ghaznah. There he fought and defeated Arslān-Shāh and established his brother, Bahrām-Shāh, on his father's throne, on condition that he proclaim the suzerainty of the Saljūq Dynasty. This was the first time that Saljūq rule had been proclaimed from the pulpits of Ghaznah.

During the reign of Bahrām-Shāh, the Ghaznavid (Subuktukīniyyah) Dynasty grew extremely weak and were attacked by the rulers of Ghur, who began seizing their territory.

11. KHUSRAW-SHĀH IBN BAHRĀM-SHĀH

During the reign of Arslān-Shāh's son, Khusraw-Shāh, the rulers of Ghur captured Ghaznah and took the last Ghaznavid rulers prisoner. With that, the Dynasty ended in 547/1152, at the hands of the Ghurid Sultan, Ghiyāth ad-Dīn.

Their rule had begun in 366/977 and endured for 181 years. Their rulers were some of the most virtuous, especially their fore-

father Maḥmūd, who achieved a great legacy fighting in the way of Allāh and in conquering India.

These are the three great dynasties which were established during the ‘Abbāsīd era and from which Muslim power in the east was derived.

As for the dynasties which were established to the west of Baghdad, they are connected with the history of Egypt. The history of Egypt will therefore be treated continuously from the time of its conquest, including the history of those dynasties.

161 A city between Sistan, Ghaznah and Herat, which was the birthplace of Imām al-Bustī, author of the famous ode (*qaṣīdah*): *‘Unwān al-Ḥikam*.

162 A famous area near Ghaznah.

163 A town near Ghaznah, in the vicinity of Zabulistan.



164 See figure: The Ghaznavid (Subuktukīniyyah) Dynasty.

165 In the same year, the ‘Abbāsīd Caliph, Qādir, sent a force to remove him from power.

166 An Indian city on the road to Ghaznah, now in Pakistan.

Lesson Thirty-Four

THE HISTORY OF EGYPT

Egypt (*Miṣr*) was conquered during the era of the Commander of the Faithful, ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb . The conquering army was led by the Amīr, ‘Amr ibn al-‘Aṣ , whom ‘Umar commanded to march to Egypt in 20/640 with four thousand courageous Muslim fighters. At that time, Egypt was a governorate of the Byzantine Empire, ruled by a Byzantine commander, as well as an appointed Coptic leader who held outward authority, called the Muqawqis.

On reaching Pelusium¹⁶⁷ ‘Amr was fought by the Byzantine forces for approaching a month, until he defeated them. The Bishop of Alexandria had written to the Copts, ordering them not to fight the Muslims with earnest, and it is said that the Copts of Pelusium supported the Muslims in that battle.

Then ‘Amr turned and proceeded, with little resistance, until he came to Bilbeis¹⁶⁸. Here too, he was met with fighting which lasted for approximately a month. Having conquered the city, he advanced to Umm Dinīn¹⁶⁹, where he was met with fierce resistance which delayed the conquest. ‘Amr therefore wrote to ‘Umar, seeking reinforcements; he responded by sending four thousand additional men. Thus strengthened, with a total of eight thousand men, ‘Amr was able to lay siege to the fortress known as Babylon, which lay close to Old Cairo, by the Hanging Church. He persistently harassed the city and aimed catapults at it, until he was on the verge of capturing it. Seeing this, the inhabitants feared for their lives and sought to reach an agreement with ‘Amr, brokered by their leader, the Muqawqis, to which the former agreed. The siege had endured for

seven months. Thereafter, however, the Copts supported ʿAmr against the Byzantine Empire, who did not accept their reconciliation with the Muslims.

After that, ʿAmr took Alexandria from the Byzantines by force, since it was the seat of their power in Egypt.

When the conquest was complete, ʿAmr ibn al-ʿAṣ became Governor of Egypt. He took up quarters in the place where he had erected his tent (*fusṭāṭ*) and established a city there which was afterwards known as Fustāṭ (and which is now referred to as Old Cairo or Ancient Cairo). He divided it into quarters: one for each squadron of his army; which are now the districts of Old Cairo.

Fustāṭ remained the capital of Egypt from the year of its conquest until 132/750, when Umayyad rule came to an end.

During this time, Egypt was a governorate of the Islamic Caliphate, governed by an amīr assigned to it by the Caliph.

Between 20/641 and 132/750, twenty-seven amīrs alternately governed Egypt. The longest-serving of these was Maslamah ibn Mukhallad, who was Governor of Egypt for fifteen years. Others governed for no longer than one or two months.

The following are some of the governors who made an impact on Egypt:

ʿAbdullāh ibn Saʿd ibn Abī Sarḥ¹⁷⁰: He led three great military campaigns. In 27/647, he invaded (lower and mid-west) Ifrīqiyah, winning a stunning victory.

He also invaded the territory of Sudan, reaching as far as Dongola in 31/651, as well as fighting what is known as the Battle of the Masts in 34/655, against the Byzantine Emperor, Constantine, the son of Heraclius. During that battle, the Byzantine fleet was seven hundred strong, while the Muslims had two hundred ships; the Muslims won a great victory against their enemies.

Another influential governor was: ‘Uqbah ibn ‘Amīr al-Juhani¹⁷¹. He built a famous mosque, close to the site where Imām Shāfi‘ī is buried. He was a reciter of the Qur’ān and a jurist.

Another was: Maslamah ibn Mukhallad¹⁷². During his time, land and sea attacks were conducted regularly. He was the longest-serving governor of that era.

Another was: ‘Abd al-‘Azīz ibn Marwān¹⁷³. While he was Governor, there was an outbreak of plague in Fustāṭ. He therefore removed to Ḥulwān, where he settled and set up residence. He brought with him his staff and built houses and mosques, reconstructing the area in the best manner, planting its palms and treating it generously.

Another was: ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abd al-Malik ibn Marwān¹⁷⁴. He ordered the diwans of Egypt to be copied into Arabic from Coptic. On the other hand, while he was governor, prices rose and the people became pessimistic. This was the first severity which the people of Egypt had experienced. ‘Abdullāh behaved corruptly and it is unfortunate for a people to have a corrupt governor, a disaster in which their interests are forsaken. The strange thing is that the Amīr was unable to enjoy what he gained from this unlawful practice, since when he was removed by his brother, Walīd ibn ‘Abd al-Malik, and reached Jordan having left Egypt, he was surrounded and all his wealth taken from him and conveyed to his brother. Thus, ‘Abdullāh bore his sin, while others enjoyed his wealth.

Another was: Ayyūb ibn Shuraḥbīl¹⁷⁵, who was appointed by the righteous Caliph, ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz. It is mentioned that he decreed an increase in provisions for the general populace. Also during his period as governor, alcohol was completely prohibited in Egypt, at great loss; for Ayyūb’s policies in Egypt were those of the good Caliph.

Another was: ‘Abd al-Malik ibn Marwān ibn Mūsā ibn Nuṣayr¹⁷⁶. It was he who ordered the use of pulpits in the small towns, whereas beforehand the governors of these towns had addressed the congregation leaning on a stick next to the *qiblah*. He was the last of the Umayyad Governors.

EGYPT UNDER THE ‘ABBĀSIDS

When Umayyad rule ended and was replaced by that of the ‘Abbāsīd Dynasty, Egypt became an ‘Abbāsīd governorate. It was conquered by the force of Ṣālīḥ ibn ‘Alī al-‘Abbāsī and Abū ‘Awn ‘Abd al-Malik ibn Yazīd. Their army set up camp outside Fuṣṭāṭ, between Ḥadrat ibn Qamīḥah and Kawm al-Jāriḥ, in the space which is approximately halfway between the bridge, Qanṭarat as-Sadd, and the wall of the cemetery, Qarāfah.

Abū ‘Awn ordered his companions to build in that place, which they did. Thereafter it was known as: ‘Askar [i.e. the Cantonments]. Eventually, its buildings, which included the amīr’s residence and a central mosque, known as Jāmi‘ al-‘Askar, became adjoined to Fuṣṭāṭ.

‘Askar continued to be the seat of Egypt’s Amīrs from the time of Abū ‘Awn, the first of the ‘Abbāsīd Amīrs, until the arrival of Aḥmad ibn Ṭūlūn; that is, from 133/750 until 254/868, a period of one hundred and twenty-two years.

Some sixty-five ‘Abbāsīd Amīrs governed Egypt, the longest-serving of whom were:

Yazīd ibn ‘Abdullāh ibn Dinār, who was Governor of Egypt for approximately ten years; and Yazīd ibn Ḥātim, who governed for some eight years.

Many others governed for only one or two years, or even one or two months. In fact, during the Caliphate of Rashīd, Egypt was

alternately governed by twenty-three amīrs; while under Caliph Ma'mūn, there were fifteen different Governors of Egypt.

Some important 'Abbāsīd Governors of Egypt include:

Yaḥyā ibn Dāwūd: He was from Khorasan and his father was Turkish. He was greatly feared, readily spilt blood and administered many punishments. He prohibited the closure of streets and shops at night, to the extent that people blocked them with strips of cane to keep dogs out. He also removed guards from the public baths, saying that anyone who lost something should hold him responsible; men would enter the baths, put down their clothes and say: 'Guard them, Abū Ṣāliḥ!' This was the state of affairs for the duration of his term as governor. Whenever Caliph Abū Ja'far al-Manṣūr mentioned him, he would say: "He is a man who fears me but does not fear Allāh."

Another governor who is remembered in negative terms is Mūsā ibn Muṣ'ab ibn ar-Rabī', from Mosul. He was strict in extracting tax and increased the rate to double the acceptable amount for each feddan. He was corrupt in his judgements and placed a duty on market traders and animals. Hence, the people hated and rejected him and he met his end by assassination. He was an oppressor and a tyrant; Layth ibn Sa'd¹⁷⁷ heard him recite during a sermon that he was giving:

﴿إِنَّا أَعْتَدْنَا لِلظَّالِمِينَ نَارًا أَحَاطَ بِهِمْ سُرَادِقُهَا﴾

Indeed, We have prepared for the wrongdoers a fire whose walls will surround them. (18:29)

Then he said: "O Allāh, do not make us hated."

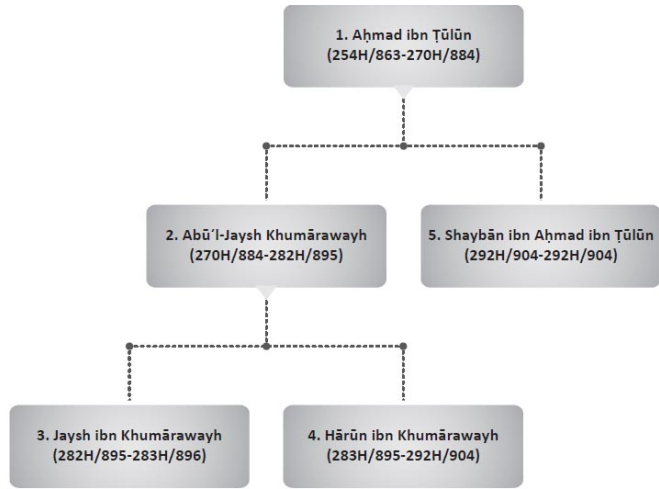
Another important 'Abbāsīd Governor of Egypt was: 'Alī ibn Sulaymān ibn 'Alī al-'Abbāsī¹⁷⁸. During his time, the practice of

enjoining good and forbidding evil became prevalent, while places of entertainment and alcohol were prohibited.

He gave a lot in charity. One of his actions was to destroy any newly-built churches in Egypt. However, his successor, Mūsā ibn ʿĪsā al-ʿAbbāsī,¹⁷⁹ permitted them to be built; they were constructed after consultation with the two Imāms: Layth ibn Saʿd and ʿAbdullāh ibn Lahīʿah¹⁸⁰.

Another was: Sirrī ibn al-Ḥakam¹⁸¹, during whose time as Governor Muḥammad ibn Idrīs ash-Shāfiʿī entered Egypt. Its people flocked to him to learn and gained understanding through his tutelage and many of them followed his legal school. He [i.e. Shāfiʿī] died in 204/820; his grave is well-known.

At the end of this period, the governors of Egypt were Turkish clients of the ʿAbbāsids who governed in accordance with the state of affairs in Baghdad. The last of these was Urjwan ibn Awlaʿ Ṭurkhān at-Turkī, who had previously been the Chief of Police. He prohibited women from entering public baths and graveyards; he also banned mourners, as well as acts of mourning such as renting clothes, blackening the face, shaving the hair and women crying. These acts were severely punished. He was removed from his post in the month of Ramaḍān, 254/868 by Aḥmad ibn Ṭūlūn.



The Ṭūlūnid Dynasty

167 A coastal city near Egypt.

168 A city ten leagues away from Fuṣṭāṭ in Egypt, on the way to Syria.

169 An ancient Egyptian village which is no longer extant; it was situated outside Cairo on the bank of the Nile.

170 ʿAbdullāh ibn Saʿd ibn Abī Sarḥ al-Qurashī al-ʿĀmirī, from the clan of Banū ʿAmir ibn Luʾay. He was their horseman and one of the heroes of the Companions ﷺ. He died in 37/656.

171 ʿUqbah ibn ʿĀmir ibn ʿAbas ibn Mālīk al-Juhanī ﷺ was a Companion of the Prophet ﷺ. He died in 58/677 or 678.

172 Maslamah ibn Mukhallad ibn Ṣāmit al-Anṣārī al-Khazrajī ﷺ was one of the great amīrs in the early period of Islām. He died in 62/682.

173 ʿAbd al-ʿAziz ibn Marwān ibn al-Ḥakam ibn Abī'l-ʿĀṣ ibn Umayyah Abū'l-Aṣbagh, Governor of Egypt. He died in 85/704.

174 ʿAbd al-ʿAziz ibn Marwān al-Umawī. He died in 90/709.

175 Ayyūb ibn Shuraḥbīl ibn Abrahah al-Aṣbaḥī, who was from Banū Ṣabāḥ and a noble and righteous Amīr. He died in 101/720.

176 Abd al-Malik ibn Marwān ibn Mūsā ibn Nuṣayr al-Lakhmī was the last Governor of Egypt during the Umayyad era. He died in 133/750.

177 Layth ibn Saʿd ibn ʿAbd ar-Raḥmān al-Fahmī, known to his associates as Abū'l-Ḥārith. He was the Imām of the people of Egypt in the fields of ḥadīth and jurisprudence in his day. He died in 175/791.

178 ʿAlī ibn Sulaymān ibn ʿAlī ibn ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿAbbās al-Hāshimī al-ʿAbbāsī, Abū'l-Ḥasan. He died in 178/794–5.

179 Mūsā ibn ʿĪsā ibn Musā ibn Muḥammad al-ʿAbbāsī al-Hāshimī, from the family of ʿAbbās. He died in 183/799.

180 ʿAbdullāh ibn Lahīʿah ibn Furʿān al-Ḥaḍramī al-Miṣrī, Abū ʿAbd ar-Raḥmān, the great judge, scholar and ḥadīth narrator of his age in Egypt. He died in 174/791.

181 Sirrī ibn al-Ḥakam ibn Yūsuf. He died in 205/820–1.

Lesson Thirty-Five

THE ṬŪLŪNID DYNASTY (ṬŪLŪNIYYAH)

1. AḤMAD IBN ṬŪLŪN AND QAṬĀ'Ī' (THE CITY OF QUARTERS)

In 254/868, Aḥmad ibn ṬŪlŪn¹⁸² came to power in Egypt, arriving seven days before the end of the month of Ramaḍān. He brought with him so many slaves and men that the Governor's Residence [in 'Askar] was unable to accommodate them; he therefore removed to the slope [of Mt. Yashkur], where he built a palace and squares. Then he directed his companions, slaves and followers to plan quarters for themselves around his own; they did so, planning and constructing until the buildings met with those of Fuṣṭāṭ.

Then the quarters of the city were demarcated, in the manner of the districts of Cairo or the cantons of Fuṣṭāṭ. Thus, Qaṭā'ī' was well-constructed, with diverging roads and passageways, within which were built beautiful mosques, mills, baths and bakeries.

Ibn ṬŪlŪn's legacy includes his famous central mosque, Jāmi' Ibn ṬŪlŪn, with its exquisite minaret with the external steps and its beautifully-crafted pulpit. It is now in disuse.

The city of Qaṭā'ī' stretched lengthwise from Qubbat al-Hawā' (the Dome of Wind), which was replaced by Qal'at al-Jabal (the Mountain Palace), as far as Jāmi' Ibn ṬŪlŪn; and widthwise from Ramaylah, situated under the Palace, to the tomb of Zayn al-cĀbidīn.

It covered a space of one square mile.

Ibn Ṭūlūn's Palace was situated close to the Mountain Palace. Between the Palace and the Central Mosque which he had built, he placed a ceremonial square. Facing the Mosque was the Governor's Residence.

Ibn Ṭūlūn was an exemplary Amīr, who put an end to many of the injustices which are usually instituted by oppressive rulers to satiate their greed.

He gave abundantly in charity to the destitute and the needy, the weak and the poor. He would devote to this two thousand dinars every month, apart from whatever he spontaneously pledged or offered in thanks for renewed blessings. It was also in addition to his kitchens, which were set up every day to give charitable offerings, in his quarters and elsewhere.


He had a seat from which he would watch the poor and imagine their joy at eating and taking away food. This would make him feel happy and he would praise Allāh for it.

He built a hospital for the sick in 'Askar (259/873), between its mosque and Kawm al-Jāriḥ, which was the first hospital in Egypt. When it was completed, he established endowments for it and stipulated that no soldier or slave-soldier (*mamlūk*) was to be treated in it. He constructed two baths for the hospital, one for men and the other for women. He also made it obligatory that the sick, on arrival, would have their clothes and money removed and given to the hospital caretaker for safe keeping; they would then be given clothes to wear and visited by the doctors until they recovered; when they could manage to eat a chicken and a flat loaf of bread, they would be instructed to leave and given back their money and clothes.

Ibn Ṭūlūn spent sixty thousand dinars on this hospital and its expenditure.

Every Friday, he himself would ride to the hospital and inspect its storerooms and their contents, as well as the doctors. He would also look upon the sick and other patients, such as the deranged who were kept there.

Egypt under Ibn Ṭūlūn was independent of the ‘Abbāsids in terms of governance.

He  died in the month of Dhū’l-Qa‘idah, 270/884.

2. ABŪ’L-JAYSH KHUMĀRAWAYH

The army swore allegiance to him following the death of his father.

Having assumed power, he gave his attention to embellishing his father’s palace. He also converted the square which his father had constructed into a garden, where he planted varieties of aromatic plants and types of tree; he had brought there every type of exotic fruit-bearing tree and varieties of flower. He had the palm-trunks coated in beautifully-crafted bronze and gold, with waterspouts of lead inserted between the bronze and the palm-trunks for water to flow through; springs of water would thus shoot out from within the trunk and rain down into prepared wells, from which the water would flow into channels which irrigated the remainder of the garden.

He also planted therein aromatic plants which he had sculpted into shapes and writing, which the gardener would maintain with scissors to prevent leaves from growing out of place.

He also planted wonderful red, blue, yellow and Genoan lilies and other similar rare and beautiful flowers.

Many strange birds such as peacocks and turkeys roamed freely.

In the living quarters of the Governor’s Residence he made a seating area, which he named ‘the House of Gold’, the walls of which

he had coated with gold mixed with lapis lazuli gemstone¹⁸³, engraved most beautifully and with the most delightful detail. On the walls, at a height of one and a half fathoms, were embossed wooden pictures, depicting himself and the members of his household, portrayed beautifully and with exquisite taste, wearing crowns of pure gold; and horses, decorated with various jewels, whose bodies wore something like clothing, coloured with wondrous dyes. That house was amongst the strangest buildings in the world at that time.

Khumārawayh also built within his residence an area for lions, containing glass cases, each of which housed a lion and his mate. The cases had doors which opened mechanically from above and a small arch through which the man responsible for the house would enter; on one side of each there was a small marble pool, and a copper pipe through which water poured. The cases looked onto a wide open yard covered with sand, on one side of which was a large marble pool with a big copper pipe from which water flowed into it; the lions would come out here if their homes needed to be cleaned or food left for them.

During Khumārawayh's governorship, provisions for the army reached nine hundred dinars annually.

His kitchen, which was known as 'the People's Kitchen', cost twenty-three thousand dinars annually.

Khumārawayh married the daughter of the Caliph Mu'taḍid in Baghdad, whose name was: Qaṭr an-Nadā. When she was ready to be married, he built for her a palace at every stage of her journey from Baghdad; whenever she arrived in one of these, she found it had been furnished with whatever she might need, protected and provided with everything that would benefit her stay. Hence,

throughout her journey from Baghdad, despite the distance travelled, it was as if she was in the palace of her father, moving from room to room, until she arrived on 1st Muḥarram 282/895.

Khumārawayh died in Damascus, which was also under his governance. He was murdered by his slaves and servants and brought to Egypt. This occurred at the end of 282/895.

3. JAYSH IBN KHUMĀRAWAYH

He assumed power following the death of his father. He was criticised for certain matters and was not on good terms with his military leaders and ignored them. They in turn feared him and devoted themselves to undermining him; then they revolted against him and removed him from power. He was deposed in the month of Jumādā'l-Ākhirah, 283/896.

4. HĀRŪN IBN KHUMĀRAWAYH

He assumed power after his brother, Jaysh, was deposed. However, one faction of the army established a correspondence with Rabī' ibn Aḥmad ibn Ṭūlūn, in order to appoint him instead of Hārūn. The former therefore mustered a force to fight his cousin, but was defeated and killed.

Thereafter, the Caliph in Baghdad, Muktafī, intended to regain control over Egypt. He therefore sent an army commanded by Muḥammad ibn Sulaymān al-Kātib, accompanied by a great fleet which fought the fleet of Hārūn and vanquished it.

All this took place whilst Hārūn was busy devoting himself to pleasure. Hence, his two paternal uncles, Shaybān and 'Adī, the sons of Aḥmad ibn Ṭūlūn, plotted together to assassinate him. They came

upon him whilst he was drunk and killed him, in the month of Ṣafar, 292/904.

5. SHAYBĀN IBN AḤMAD IBN ṬŪLŪN

He assumed power after the assassination of his nephew. Many of the military leaders condemned the murder of Hārūn; they rebelled against Shaybān and sent a message to the Caliph's envoy, Muḥammad ibn Sulaymān, who came to Fuṣṭāṭ. When Shaybān learnt of this, he asked for protection and was granted it, having ruled for a mere twelve days. Then Muḥammad ibn Sulaymān entered Egypt; he set fire to Qaṭā'i^c and his men looted Fuṣṭāṭ, breaking open the prisons and releasing their inmates. Having perpetrated every possible vile act, they turned the people out of their houses. They also expelled all twenty of Aḥmad ibn ṬŪlŪn's children, as well as their military leaders, so that not a single member of the dynasty remained in Egypt. Their dwellings were left empty; their monuments shrank back from them; and their status failed them.

THE RETURN OF EGYPT TO THE 'ABBĀSID CALIPHATE

The ṬŪlŪnid Dynasty had endured in Egypt for thirty-seven years, six months and twenty-two days, during which five ṬŪlŪnid Amīrs had held power. Thereafter, Egypt returned to its status as an 'Abbāsīd governorate, and remained so from that year—292/904—until the coming of the Fāṭimid Dynasty (*ad-Dawlah al-Fāṭimiyyah*) in 358/909, a period of sixty-six years, during which Egypt was governed by a total of thirteen amīrs. It was a time full of sedition and unrest, due to the weakness of the state which had appointed

these governors. The Fāṭimid Caliphs therefore applied themselves to capturing Egypt, so there were ongoing skirmishes between them and the people of Egypt.

The most famous governors during this period were:

Muḥammad ibn Ṭughun ibn Jaff al-Farghānī, whose title was: Ikhshīdī. He was Governor of Egypt twice, the second time under Caliph Rāḍī bi'llāh, in 323/935, when he remained in his post until his death in 334/946.

His son, Unūjūr, assumed power after him, by his father's appointment. However, he was dominated in governing state affairs by Kāfūr the eunuch, whose title was Ikhshīdī, after his master.

When Unūjūr died in 347/958 and his brother, 'Alī ibn al-Ikhshīd, assumed power, Kāfūr's position was strengthened and he became the de facto ruler.

Following the death of 'Alī, Kāfūr assumed governorship of Egypt in 355/966. He was a contemporary of the poet, Mutanabbī, who composed great panegyrics for him when Kāfūr heaped gifts upon him and malicious defamatory poems when he was angry with him. In doing so, he subjected the whole people of Egypt to the same defamation, for accepting such a governor.


Kāfūr died in 357/968 and was succeeded by Aḥmad ibn 'Alī al-Ikhshīd, who was aged eleven. During his era, General Jawhar took possession of Egypt in the name of the Fāṭimid Caliphate.

¹⁸² See figure: The Ṭūlūnid Dynasty.

¹⁸³ A sky-blue or violet gemstone.

Lesson Thirty-Six

THE FĀṬIMID DYNASTY (AD-DAWLAH AL-FĀṬIMIYYAH)

The Fāṭimid Dynasty traces its lineage back to Fāṭimah az-Zahrā¹⁸⁴, the daughter of the Messenger of Allāh .

It is also known as ‘Ubaydiyyah, after its first Caliph: ‘Ubayd Allāh al-Mahdī, who ruled Ifrīqiyah through the endeavour of his general and propagandist, Abū ‘Abdullāh al-Ḥusayn ibn Aḥmad ash-Shī‘ī. He had marched to Ifrīqiyah and called the people to support al-Mahdī al-Muntaẓir [i.e. the awaited Guided One]; with those who answered this call, he went on to capture Kairouan, Raqādah and Sijilmāsah. ‘Ubayd Allāh al-Mahdī presented himself in Raqādah¹⁸⁵ in 297/909, where he was proclaimed as ruler and given the title: Mahdī, Commander of the Faithful. What was striking, was that he did not afford Abū ‘Abdullāh ash-Shīcī, who had established his rule, his due right; rather, once he was securely in control, Mahdī had him assassinated, just as the ‘Abbāsīd Caliph, Maṣṣūr, had done for Abū Muslim al-Khurāsānī.

Mahdī’s dominion continued to expand until he possessed most of North Ifrīqiyah; namely, the Near- and Mid-West [i.e. Tunisia and Algeria]. He built the city of Mahdiyyah and surrounded it with a wall the panels of which were each constructed from a hundred kintars of iron. He began building the city in 303/915–6, at which time his forces were involved in skirmishes with Egypt. He did not manage to take Egypt, but died in 322/934.

His son and heir apparent, Qā’im bi-Amr’illāh Maḥmūd, ruled after him and followed his father’s example in governance.

He died in 334/946. Throughout the whole of his Caliphate, he never ascended a pulpit, nor did he mount a horse to hunt; and he led the people in prayer on a single occasion.

Qā'im was succeeded by his son, Maṣṣūr bi-Naṣrī'llāh Ismā'īl. He was an eloquent orator who could improvise a speech, as well as being courageous and intelligent. He died in 341/953.

His son, Mu'izz li-Dīni'llāh Ma'add, ruled after him in turn. His vizier and director of affairs was his client, Jawhar aṣ-Ṣiqillī, whom Mu'izz sent to conquer Egypt. He marched there from Kairouan in the month of Rabī' al-Awwal, 358/969. On arriving, he discovered that there was little concern about the conquest, since the people of Egypt were in favour of abandoning 'Abbāsid rule in exchange for 'Alid rule.

Once he had secured his position, he began building Cairo (Qāhirah). At that time, there was a sandy area between Old Cairo and 'Ayn Shams which people crossed on their way from Fuṣṭāṭ to 'Ayn Shams, situated between the Muqattam Hills and the Nile Gulf. When Jawhar arrived there, there were no structures other than the garden of the Ikhshīd founder, Muḥammad ibn Ṭuḡhuj, known as Kāfūrī; a Christian monastery known as Dayr al-'Iẓām (the Monastery of Bones); and a third place known as Quṣayr ash-Shawk.

'Qāhirah' was the name given to everything within the wall which stretches lengthwise from the gate of Bāb Zuwaylah to that of Bāb al-Futūḥ, and finally Bāb an-Naṣr; and widthwise from Bāb Sa'ādah and Bāb al-Khūkhah to Bāb al-Barqiyyah and Bāb al-Maḥrūq.

The city was mapped out in the month of Jumādā'l-Ākhirah, 359/970, with each tribe [or group] being allocated a district which would bear its name. Hence, the Zuwaylah tribe were responsible for

building the quarter known by that name, while the Greeks were allocated two quarters: the Greek Quarter (Ḥārat ar-Rūm), the entrance to which is next to the school, Madrasat al-‘Aqqādīn; and the Inner Greek Quarter (Ḥārat ar-Rūm al-Juwayniyyah).

Jawhar laid the foundations of the palace which is situated near the tomb of Ḥusayn today.

He then established the first grand mosque to be built in Cairo, al-Jāmi‘ al-Azhar, with six days remaining in the month of Jumādā’l-Ūlā, 359/970. He completed its construction nine days into Ramaḍān, 361/972. He wrote around the dome in the first gallery, on the right of the niche (*miḥrāb*) and pulpit, starting with the *Basmallah*: *One of the structures ordered to be built by ‘Abdullāh and his patron, Abū Tamīm Ma‘add, Imām Mu‘izz li-Dini’llāh, Commander of the Faithful—May Allāh bless him and his noble forefathers and descendents—written by his servant, Secretary Jawhar aṣ-Ṣiqillī.* The first Friday congregational prayers were performed there on 7 Ramaḍān 361/972.

When this was complete, Mu‘izz left the city of Mahdiyyah in Northwest Africa and came to Egypt, entering Cairo along with all his sons and brothers, including all the remaining children of ‘Ubayd Allāh al-Mahdī, on 7 Ramaḍān 362/973. He ordered that it be written in every city of Egypt: *The best of people after the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ is the Commander of the Faithful, ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib.* He led the people in the Prayer of ‘Īd al-Fiṭr in the place of prayer, glorifying Allāh thirty times in each bow and prostration; after the prayer, he delivered a sermon. On the day on which allegiance was pledged to him, he set out to conquer the Egyptian Gulf, an undertaking in which he remained engaged until his death, two months and seven days after entering Cairo. The name: al-Qāhirah

al-Mu‘izziyyah refers to him. Supplications were performed for him throughout Northwest Africa and the lands of Egypt, Syria and the Two Sanctuaries of Makkah and Madīnah.

2. ‘AZĪZ BI’LLĀH NIZĀR

He ruled as Caliph after his father, Mu‘izz, until 386/996, for a total of twenty-one years and five and a half months.

3. ḤĀKIM BI-AMRI’LLĀH MANṢŪR

He assumed power after the death of his brother, ‘Azīz. It was he who established the great mosque which bears his name, situated next to the city gate: Bāb al-Futtūḥ. Its construction was completed in 403/1012–13 and it required 36,000 cubits of mats to furnish it. The Caliph would perform the prayer on the first Friday of Ramaḍān in Jāmi‘ al-Qāhirah (i.e. al-Azhar), the second in Jāmi‘ al-Ḥākim, and the third in Jāmi‘ al-‘Atīq (in Fuṣṭāṭ). Perhaps this is why the rulers of Egypt today perform the prayer on the last Friday of Ramaḍān in the oldest mosque in the whole of Egypt, Jāmi‘ ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ.

Ḥākim possessed some contradictory characteristics, such as tyranny and justice, generosity and stinginess. He was strict in implementing security in Egypt, which he achieved by artful means—to the extent that he claimed to the populace to have knowledge of the unseen. For instance, he would say to a man: ‘You did such and such yesterday.’ Of course, he could only do this through his many spies—male and female—who were spread throughout the land with the task of communicating people’s news to him. When

this claim of his grew, someone wrote him a note and threw it to him whilst he was in the midst of his retinue; it said:

We accepted oppression and tyranny,

But not unbelief and stupidity.

If you have been granted knowledge of what is hidden,

Reveal to us the author of this memorandum.

This harassment of the people was one of the reasons why his sister plotted his assassination. Those who were to carry out the task were instructed to do so when Ḥākim went out to hunt. One day, he set out for Ḥulwān, where he was ambushed by the slaves who were prepared to kill him. They assassinated him in 411/1021.

4. ZĀHIR LI-IʿZĀZ DĪNILLĀH ʿALĪ

Allegiance was sworn to him after the death of his brother, Ḥākim, on the day of ʿĪd an-Naḥr, 411/1021.

He drank wine and permitted its consumption by the populace, and their listening to singing. As a result, during his reign, people became preoccupied with amusement. When senior members of the dynasty saw this, they seized the opportunity to take over governance, forbidding people to disturb Zāhir whilst he was engaged in his pleasures.

During this time, there was increasing instability, prices rose—to the extent that a cow's head would be sold for fifty dirhams—and water became precious in its scarcity. Thus, tribulation was widespread, until the situation came to a head due to the extreme rise in prices, and the people cried to Zāhir: 'The hunger! The hunger, O Commander of the Faithful! Your father did not do this to

us; nor did your grandfather. O Allāh! O Allāh! What a situation we are in!’ That was in 415/1024–5.

The situation would improve and then worsen, until Zāhir died in 427/1036.

5. MUSTANŞIR BI’LLĀH MA‘ADD

Allegiance was sworn to him following the death of his father, Zāhir, when he was seven years old. He ruled as Caliph for sixty years, a duration which is unmatched by any other Muslim Caliph or ruler.

During that era, Egypt was the scene of abominable reports and stories. In 453/1061, there was a high turn over of viziers, judges and their governorates, due to the extensive association of rabble with the Caliph. So many base people came to him, that he would receive eight hundred petitions per day, containing defense pleas and slanderous accusations. As a result, matters appeared dubious to him and situations became contradictory. Then, differences arose within the state army, which was composed of slaves and Turks, who fell to fighting one another. In addition, the administrative capacity of the Caliph’s viziers had grown weak, on account of the short period that each of them held office; hence, the districts fell into ruin, and few prospered. Most of them were taken over by men who spent excessively, took matters lightly and committed atrocities.

Such was the case until matters eventually led to a great calamity, the like of which has never been known in the history of Egypt. First prices rose. This was followed by a plague so severe that when one member of a household died from it, a day and a night would not pass before the rest of that household were also dead.

There was no one even to assume power. Soldiers took to looting and the matter got out of control. The powerful escaped from Egypt

and travelled to Syria and Iraq. The Caliphate lost all its prestige and the Caliph was left sitting on a mat with no one to serve him except three servants. These calamities persisted for seven years, from 457/1065 until 464/1072.

During that period, a dry measure of wheat was sold for eighty dinars. When this ran out, the people ate cats and dogs. Finally, the situation became so severe that people ate one another.

As a result, Fuṣṭāṭ fell into ruin, while the sites of ‘Askar and Qaṭā’i^c became empty, as well as the suburbs of Old Cairo, near Qarāfah.

The situation remained this way until the Commander of the Armies, Badr al-Jamālī, came forward in 466/1073–4 and took control of the situation by force, bringing a semblance of order. Conditions improved and prices receded. While he held power, Mustanṣir was restrained from acting independently. When Afdal [Badr al-Jamālī] died, his son, Afdal Shāhinshāh, was appointed by the army as his successor.

Mustanṣir died in 487/1094. His weak intellect, inclination towards base people and tendency to listen to their slander caused the loss of capable administrators and governors and the rise of hypocrites and traitors. Both his and their standing diminished, to the extent that they were incapable of running affairs. He and his society were then afflicted with calamities which left them without basic nourishment. At that time, a noble woman would give him a daily charitable offering of a bowl of crumbs, which was his only meal a day.

6. MUSTA‘LĪ BI’LLĀH AḤMAD

On the death of Mustanşir, Afḍal, son of the Commander of the Armies, installed in power his son, Aḥmad. However, it was Afḍal who ruled; Musta‘lī had no capacity to act independently.

During the reign of Musta‘lī, the Fāṭimid Dynasty withdrew and its missionary activity in Syria ended. At the same time, the Europeans arose and captured much of its coastal territories. The Egyptian state had nothing with which to repel its enemies.

184 For the authenticity of this lineage, see Suyūtlī’s *Tārīkh al-Khulafā’*.

185 Kairouan (Qayrawān), Raqādah and Sijilmāsah: cities in Ifrīqiyah.

Lesson Thirty-Seven

7. ĀMIR BI-AḤKĀMI'LLĀH MANṢŪR

He was five years old when he became Caliph, appointed by Afḍal, son of the Amīr of the Armies. The latter persisted as de facto ruler until he was killed in 515/1121. Āmir then appointed as his vizier the commander Abū 'Abdullāh Muḥammad ibn Fātik al-Baṭā'ihī, to whom he gave the title: Ma'mūn. He ran the affairs of state until he was arrested in 519/1125, after which Āmir was free to rule independently, without opponent or rival.

His era was full of pleasure and pleasant living, owing to his many gifts and the gifts of his entourage, such that there was no one in Old Cairo or Cairo who complained of his reign at all. That is, until life was made difficult for people by Ibn Abī Najāḥ al-Mustawfī, a monk who took control of people and gained access to the treasury accounts. He began by appealing to Christians and located sums of money in their quarters, carrying it out at every first opportunity. Then he turned his attention to confiscating the wealth of the remaining practitioners, employees, bondsmen and workers, and so on—until all the chiefs, judges, clerks, and drivers had been harmed by him. In the end, there was no one who had not been afflicted. This resulted in Āmir's reputation amongst the people being tainted. When he realised this, he had Ibn Abī Najāḥ arrested and beaten to death with sandals, before being thrown in the Nile.

It was Āmir who constructed the Aqmar Mosque.

Also during his reign, the Europeans captured many fortresses and strong-holds on the Syrian coast and in Acre, Ghazzah, Tripoli and elsewhere.

He had a very dark complexion, memorised the Qur'ān and wrote in a weak hand. He was reckless in spilling blood, committing prohibited acts and condoning abominations.

He was killed in 524/1130.

8. ḤĀFİZ LI-DĪNILLĀH ʿABD AL-MAJĪD IBN MUḤAMMAD IBN AL-MUSTANŞIR

Senior members of the dynasty appointed him as Caliph after the assassination of his cousin, Āmir, as a guarantor of succession to one of the latter's expected children, who was still in the womb of his mother¹⁸⁶. His vizier was Yānis, who had a private regiment which gave its name to Yānisiyyah Lane (now called: Ansiyyah Road).

Ḥāfīz's viziers also included Bahrām al-Armanī.

During his time in power, the Muslim situation worsened; however, he did not rule for long.

He was resolute and a skilled politician, benevolent and wise, a hoarder of wealth whose dominant characteristic was clemency.

His reign witnessed strife between factions within the army, which were ongoing when he died in 544/1149.

9. ZĀFİR BI-AMRILLĀH ISMAʿĪL

He was installed in power after the death of his father, Ḥāfīz, and was dominated by his vizier. During this period, state affairs were not sound, since the Caliph was preoccupied with his entertainments and pleasures.

He was eventually assassinated by his vizier, ʿAbbās, in 549/1154.

10. FĀʾİZ BI-NAŞRILLĀH ʿĪSĀ

He was installed as Caliph after the assassination of his father, aged five. He was controlled by his vizier, Ṭalā'ī' ibn Ruzzayk, whose title was: al-Malik aṣ-Ṣāliḥ. It was he who built the mosque outside the Bāb Zuwaylah gate, called Jāmi' aṣ-Ṣāliḥ. He had intended it to be a burial place for the head of Ḥusayn, which had been brought from 'Asqalān (Ashkelon) during his era. The Caliph refused, however, saying that it should be in the vicinity of the palace. This was indeed the case, for it was interred in the tomb where it now rests, in 548/1153.

The Caliphate of Fā'iz was short-lived. He died in 555/1160, at the age of eleven.

11. 'ĀḌID LI-DĪN'LLĀH 'ABDULLĀH IBN YŪSUF IBN AL-ḤĀFIZ

'ĀḌid was the last of the Fāṭimid Caliphs in Egypt. He was appointed by Ṭalā'ī' ibn Ruzzayk after the death of Fā'iz at the age of eleven. Hence, Ṣāliḥ governed affairs until he was killed. His son, Ruzzayk, replaced him but was opposed by Shāwar ibn Mujīr as-Sa'dī, Governor of Qūṣ. The latter advanced to Cairo, killed Ruzzayk and took over the role of vizier.

Those days were full of instability and strife, with the Europeans looking to capture Egypt, having already taken the Syrian coast. The Caliph therefore sought the help of Maḥmūd Nūr ad-Dīn, who was engaged in fighting the Crusaders in Syria. He came to his aid with a force led by Asad ad-Dīn Shīrkūh, the uncle of Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn ibn Yūsuf, which came to Egypt. Fearful for his vizierate, however, Shāwar appealed for help to the European King, Amalric, against Shīrkūh. Troubles and difficulties beset the two sides and the affair ended with the killing of Shāwar. Asad ad-Dīn Shīrkūh was victorious

and took over the vizierate of ʿĀḍid but died two months later. He was replaced by Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn ibn Yūsuf, who managed affairs and directed them to his own advantage. He began delivering addresses on behalf of ʿĀḍid and then for Maḥmūd Nūr ad-Dīn. When the Caliph became increasingly weak, Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn considered stopping his addresses, as well as those for the ʿAbbāsids, but then ʿĀḍid grew ill and died in 567/1171. With his death, the Fāṭimid Dynasty ended in Egypt; it was succeeded, in effect, by the Ayyūbid Dynasty, and in name by the ʿAbbāsids.

The Fāṭimid Dynasty had ruled Egypt from 358/969 until 567/1171, a period of two hundred and nine years. Their capital was Cairo, which they established, and their dominion extended across North Africa, Egypt, Syria and the Ḥijāz. They were eventually weakened as a result of their viziers taking control for themselves, such that there were two rulers in power: the Caliph, who ruled in name, and the viziers, who ruled in actuality. The former was constantly seeking to restore his stolen right, neglecting no means that might accomplish this, no matter what the harmful consequences; while the latter were determined to hold onto what they had procured, having taken control of the state and its army. Meanwhile, the common good was neglected and civil strife increased, which heralded the downfall of the dynasty. One of the ways in which the viziers preserved their power was by installing caliphs who were unsuitably young. How many a caliph did they appoint who had not yet reached manhood? Then, once he reached it, he began to challenge them and vice versa. Without doubt, this led to the destruction and complete disappearance of the dynasty.

The Fāṭimid era encompassed injustice and justice, ease and hardship. This was because leadership of society was in the hands of a single man, governing arbitrarily. Hence, if he happened to be kind-

natured and well brought-up, conditions improved; but if he were wicked and greedy, with a liking for what belonged to the people, then conditions would worsen. Moreover, every individual comprises both good and evil.

Such was the state of Egypt under the Fāṭimids and the rulers who preceded them. However, there is some evidence that when it was independent, as well as under the Ṭūlūnids and the Fāṭimids, more building and construction took place and there was more prosperity.

Consider, for example, how the Ṭūlūnids built the city of Qaṭā'i^{١٤}, its square, palace, beautiful gardens and great mosque; and that society enjoyed much ease and prosperity during their era.

Consider also how the Fāṭimids built Cairo, al-Azhar, and the mosques of Ḥākim and Aqmar; and that the beauty and splendour of Egypt increased during their era (it's early and middle phases), for they had great palaces and beautiful pleasure gardens. This was merely due to the fact that they were free to act independently, so that when they devoted themselves to that which is good, they were able to create the best thing.

The Fāṭimid Dynasty inclined towards knowledge and wisdom. They had a library which contained more books than have ever been collected in Egypt. The books—on all kinds of knowledge—were arranged on bookcases numbering at least forty, and included eighty thousand books of ancient knowledge. This was in addition to the books kept in Dār al-ʿIlm in Cairo.

Ibn aṭ-Ṭuwayr said: “Each bookcase contained over two hundred thousand bound volumes and a small number of those that were unbound.” This is supported by the fact that when Qāḍī Fāḍil¹⁸⁷ established the Fāḍiliyyah Madrasah in Cairo, he put there one hundred thousand bound volumes of books from the palace.

The Fāṭimids also had an institute called Dār al-‘Ilm, which was taken on by Ḥākim bi-Amri’llāh and opened in the month of Jumādā’l-Ūlā, 395/1004. It was the seat of jurists and books were brought there from the bookcases of the inhabited palaces. People came there and those who wished to make a copy of something which they sought there did so; likewise, those who wished to read something there did so also. Qur’ān reciters, astronomers, grammarians, linguists and physicians all came and sat there, once the institute had been furnished and decorated, with curtains hung on every door and corridor; and a caretaker, servants, attendants and others were appointed and designated to its service.

In the institute were collected books from the shelves of the Commander of the Faithful, Ḥākim bi-Amri’llāh, which he had ordered to be brought there. They comprised works in all fields of knowledge and literature, as well as original manuscripts-such as had never been seen before in the collection of any ruler. All of this he made public property, accessible by anyone from the various classes who inclined to reading and studying books. Furthermore, he provided there whatever ink, pens, paper and inkwells that people needed.

Ḥākim also bequeathed places in Fuṣṭāṭ as endowments, some of which he assigned to Dār al-‘Ilm.

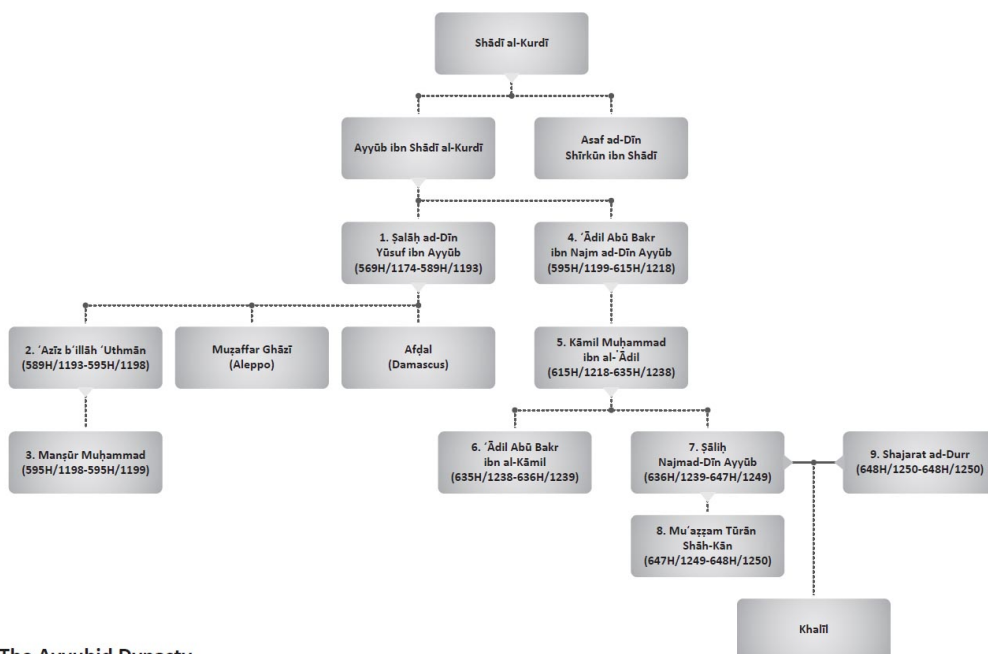
In addition, the Fāṭimid Caliphs adopted certain festivals and holidays which involved all their subjects, and during which their benefits increased.

The first of these was the New Year holiday, followed by the Day of ‘Ashūrā’. The latter, they adopted as a day of sorrow on which was held a great feast, known as the Feast of Sorrow, much of which would reach the people. This was a memorial of the killing of Ḥusayn ibn ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib.

Then there were the six birthdays: the birthday of the Prophet ﷺ ; that of ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib; that of his sons, Ḥasan and Ḥusayn; that of their mother, Fāṭimah; and the birthday of the ruling Caliph.

During the month of Ramaḍān, they practised many forms of piety.

In sum, Egypt during the early and middle parts of the Fāṭimid era was happy and vibrant. Its people were content and enjoyed the welfare which resulted from the power of the ruling dynasty and their devotion to good and charitable actions. However, once the dynasty weakened, from the time of Mustanṣir, and their viziers became de facto rulers, this weakness manifested itself in conditions generally. This was especially the case following the Great Calamity which afflicted Egypt.



The Ayyubid Dynasty

186 Āmir’s wife bore a daughter, so allegiance was officially sworn to Ḥāfiẓ li-Dīni’llāh as Caliph on 15 Muḥarram 525/1130.

187 Abū'l-Majd ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥasan al-Bīsānī, the great patron and honourable judge, who was without peer during his time. In addition to being Vizier to Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn, he was his secretary, companion, associate and friend. He performed a lot of worship and acts of charity and led a virtuous life. He died in 596/1200.

Lesson Thirty-Eight

THE AYYŪBID DYNASTY (AD-DAWLAH AL-AYYŪBIYYAH)

This dynasty traces its origins to Ayyūb ibn Shādī al-Kurdī,¹⁸⁸ who spent his early life in the service of Zankī, father of Maḥmūd Nūr ad-Dīn, and then entered the service of Nūr ad-Dīn himself, following the death of Zankī. When Nūr ad-Dīn's dominion expanded greatly, the Fāṭimid Caliph of Egypt appealed to him for help to repel the Europeans from Egypt, so he sent him an army under the command of Asad ad-Dīn Shīrkūh ibn Shādī, Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn's paternal uncle. He came to Egypt, repelled the European attacks, killed Shāwar the Vizier and himself assumed the vizierate of the Caliph, 'Āḍid. However, he died two months into the post and was succeeded by his nephew, Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn Yūsuf ibn Ayyūb. He was considering whether to stop proclaiming the Fāṭimids as Caliphs in favour of the 'Abbāsids in Baghdad. When he executed his plan, publicly promoting the 'Abbāsīd Caliph, Mustadī', it was not long before 'Āḍid died and the Fāṭimid Dynasty came to an end. Then Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn handed over Egypt to the 'Abbāsids, in the name of his master, Maḥmūd Nūr ad-Dīn.

When Maḥmūd Nūr ad-Dīn died in 569/1174, Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn became the sole ruler of Egypt, to which he then added some Syrian territories. He had an army of Kurds in Egypt.

Once he had control of the situation, he turned his attention to putting these territories in order. He commanded that the levies which had been introduced during the last years of Fāṭimid rule should be ended and signed a contract ensuring this, which was

drawn up by his secretary, al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil ‘Abd ar-Raḥīm al-Bīsānī. This was published and read out from the pulpits in Egypt.

In addition, he rebuilt the City Wall of Cairo from rock, it having previously been built of brick. Its construction was overseen by Amīr Bahā’ ad-Dīn Qarāqūsh, the Abyssinian eunuch, who gave it iron-plated gates.

It was also Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn who began the construction of the Mountain-top Citadel, which was completed after him and became the seat of the ruler during the Ayyūbid era and of their successors.

During his reign, the Europeans landed at the port of Dumyāt (Damietta). Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn marched to confront them, fought and defeated them. Their fleet consisted of some two hundred ships.

His legacy includes some magnificent architecture.

Nevertheless, his greatest Islamic legacy remains the wars which he fought against the Crusaders, who had captured many Syrian territories. He retook from them Jerusalem and other cities, and was victorious against them despite the great number of their forces. This is not to mention his benevolent treatment of the prisoners he took from them. He was a man of justice who was not made cruel by this world and its finery. When he died, he was found to have accumulated neither silver nor gold; neither did he leave behind any village, field, property or estate. Rather, he was in the habit of spending everything he had on jihād and various forms of piety.

He  died in 589/1193 in Damascus, where his grave is.

2. ‘AZĪZ BİLLĀH ‘UTHMĀN

Allegiance was sworn to him as ruler of Egypt after the death of his father, Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn, as his appointed successor. He was the youngest of his brothers.

His brother, Afḍal, became ruler in Damascus.

His other brother, Muẓaffar Ghāzī, became ruler in Aleppo.

All this was by the order of their father; however, each of them secretly desired to expand his dominion by taking from his brothers.

As for ‘Azīz, he did not follow in his father’s footsteps in Egypt, but rather behaved ignominiously, reinstating the levies which his father had removed and making them even more repulsive. He openly committed sinful acts, to the extent that wine was carried in broad daylight during his reign and was even taxed.

He died in 595/1198 and was buried next to Imām Shāfi‘ī.

3. MANṢŪR MUḤAMMAD

Allegiance was sworn to him following the death of his father, ‘Azīz.

At this time, it was Bahā’ ad-Dīn Qarāqūsh who managed the affairs of state. He governed the populace well and won their affection and support.

The period also witnessed the death of al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil¹⁸⁹.

Rule was never attributed to Manṣūr, since his uncle coveted his dominion. He marched against him, fought and deposed him, and then had him imprisoned in the Mountain-top Citadel.

4. ‘ĀDIL ABŪ BAKR IBN NAJM AD-DĪN AYYŪB

He was the brother of Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn.

Allegiance was sworn to him as ruler after the deposition of Manṣūr in the month of Shawwāl, 595/1199.

During his reign, the Nile failed to flood, which led to a drought and plague in which most of the population perished and the price of a measure of wheat reached one hundred dinars.

5. KĀMIL MUḤAMMAD IBN AL-ʿĀDIL

Allegiance was sworn to him as ruler of Egypt after the death of his father, ʿĀdil. He was the eldest of his brothers and acted as his father's deputy during his lifetime.

During his reign, the Europeans arrived at Dumyāṭ and captured it. Kāmil marched on them and surrounded them there for approximately seventeen months. During the siege, he founded the city of Maṣṣūrah, which is now the capital of Daqahliyah Governorate. When the siege became too long for the Europeans, they sent to Kāmil, seeking his guarantee of safety, in return for which they would leave Dumyāṭ and return to their lands. That was in 619/1222.

On his return to Egypt, Kāmil began building his school, the Kāmiliyyah Madrasah, which was between the two palaces and was called: Dār al-Ḥadīth. It was also he who established the great dome over the tomb of Imām Shāfiʿī. When his mother died he had her interred in the Imām's tomb. Kāmil himself died in Damascus in 635/1238.

6. ʿĀDIL ABŪ BAKR IBN AL-KĀMIL

Allegiance was sworn to him in Egypt following the death of his father, Kāmil. When news of this reached his brother, Najm ad-Dīn Ayyūb—his father's deputy in Aleppo, he hastened to Egypt with a great army, fought his brother and defeated him in 636/1239. He deposed him and had him imprisoned.

7. ṢĀLIḤ NAJM AD-DĪN AYYŪB

Allegiance was sworn to him after the deposition of his brother, Kāmil.

Once power was his, he increased the number of his military slaves (*Mamālik* or *Mamlūks*) until there was not enough space for them in Cairo. Then they began disturbing the people and looting shops, such that the people were in uproar against them. When news of this reached al-Malik aṣ-Ṣāliḥ, he built for them a citadel on Rawḍah Island, near the Nilometer (*Miqyās*). He housed them there, calling them: *Mamālik Baḥriyyah*. They numbered nearly one thousand.

It was Ṣāliḥ who established the school which is named after him in the vicinity of one of the City Gates: *Bāb aṣ-Ṣāghah*. The town of Ṣāliḥiyyah, in the Sharqiyyah Governorate, also traces its origins to him.

During his reign, the French came and captured Dumyāt. When their vanguard reached Manṣūrah, al-Malik aṣ-Ṣāliḥ marched out against them; however, he did not manage to accomplish his jihād, but died in Manṣūrah. His troops concealed the news of his death for fear of the Europeans. They bore him to the Mountain-top Citadel, where he was buried in 647/1249.

8. MU‘AZZAM TŪRĀN SHĀH-KĀN

When his father, al-Malik aṣ-Ṣāliḥ, became ill, Mu‘azzam was in Ḥiṣn Kayfā (Hasankeyf). The commanders sent for him to come and assume power. He did so after his father’s death, which the amīrs had concealed until he arrived. Then they pledged allegiance to him.

Once this matter had been settled, the soldiers set to fighting the Europeans in earnest, inflicting upon them a heavy defeat and taking captive their king, Louis IX. They imprisoned him in the residence of

Fakhr ad-Dīn ibn Luqmān, who was Chief Justice and Secretary in Manṣūrah, and a eunuch named Ṣabīḥ was placed in charge of him. (The house is to this day a historic site in Manṣūrah, next to the Mosque of Muwāfi, and is visited by tourists.) King Louis IX remained imprisoned until the time of Mu‘izz Aybak, from whom he bought his freedom on the guarantee that he would not attack Muslim territory.

Having achieved this victory, Tūrān Shāh moved from Manṣūrah to Fāraskūr¹⁹⁰. He was not a resolute ruler, however, and distrusted his father’s Mamlūks. Once it became apparent that he intended to eradicate them, they pre-empted him and assassinated him in the month of Muḥarram, 648/1250.

He was the last of the Ayyūbid rulers. They had held power for a period of some eighty-six years.

9. SHAJARAT AD-DURR

After their assassination of Tūrān Shāh, the Mamlūks agreed to appoint as ruler Shajarat ad-Durr, the wife of al-Malik aṣ-Ṣāliḥ and mother of his son, Khalīl, with Mu‘izz Aybak at-Turkmānī in charge of governing the kingdom’s affairs.

She was the first woman in Islām to be appointed ruler. She governed her subjects well during her time in power and the people were content with her. Aybak never acted in any matter without first consulting her. She would sign decrees: Wālidat Khalīl (Mother of Khalīl). Addresses were made in her name from the pulpits; after supplicating on behalf of the Caliph, the speaker would say: “And protect, O Allāh, the righteous authority, Queen of the Muslims, ‘Iṣmat ad-Dunyā wa’d-Dīn (Preservation of this world and of the Religion), she of the beautiful veil and the sublime screen, mother of

Khalīl the deceased and wife of al-Malik aṣ-Ṣāliḥ, Najm ad-Dīn Ayyūb.”

However, the Caliph in Baghdad objected to her appointment. When Shajarat ad-Durr learnt of this, she willingly deposed herself from power—without compulsion.

It was she who had the mosque which is named after her near the tomb of Sayyidah Nafīṣah constructed.

GENERAL ASPECTS OF THE AYYŪBID DYNASTY

The Ayyūbids were a war-like dynasty who spent most of their time engaged in battles against the Crusaders in Syria and Egypt.

The most influential of them in this was the founder of the dynasty, Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn Yūsuf ibn Ayyūb. The wars between the two sides had barely subsided before Sultan Ṣāliḥ Najm ad-Dīn Ayyūb, the last of the dynasty’s rulers, died fighting the Crusaders in the vicinity of Dumyāṭ, as did his son.

When a ruling dynasty is engaged in persistent wars, it is prevented from undertaking other works which would be of use to the society and benefit them in their worldly lives. Nevertheless, Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn Yūsuf’s high-mindedness meant that he did what was beneficial for his society despite the hardships of war with which he had to contend. He built many schools and received warmly and courteously religious scholars who came to him from all over; these in turn benefitted the people and taught in the schools which he had established.

In addition, he manifested to the people some of the ways of ‘Umar [ibn al-Khaṭṭāb]. He established the balance of justice and relieved the people by removing the injustice which the Fāṭimids had introduced in the latter days of their rule. For this, he is

remembered by history in the best way and is a subject of pride for Muslims whenever mentioned.

It is unfortunate that after his death members of his family competed for dominion. As a result, Ayyūbid rulers were torn between two great concerns:

The first of these was standing up to the Crusaders to ensure that they did not regain the upper hand and with it the hard-won gains of their predecessors.

The second was fighting and removing their rivals. All of this led to their relatively minor contribution to civil society.

Nevertheless, we do not forget their great jihād in regaining dominion over many Muslim territories which the Europeans had taken, and their heroic stance against those fanatical Europeans who were seeking to capture their lands.

188 See figure: The Ayyūbid Dynasty.

189 His biography is mentioned on p. 195.

190 An Egyptian town, close to Dumyāt.

Lesson Thirty-Nine

THE MAMLŪK DYNASTY (DAWLAT AL-MAMĀLĪK)

Al-Malik aṣ-Ṣāliḥ, Najm ad-Dīn Ayyūb, owned military slaves (*mamālīk* or *mamlūks*) whom he had bought and raised, and who displayed great feats of bravery during the wars between the Muslims and the Europeans in the vicinity of Faraskur and Dumyāṭ. Afterwards, Tūrān Shāh ibn al-Malik aṣ-Ṣāliḥ was assassinated and the Mamlūks—who were now in command—agreed to appoint as ruler Shajarat ad-Durr, the wife of their master.

When the Caliph in Baghdad criticised this appointment, Shajarat ad-Durr stepped down as ruler; then it was agreed that the leader of the Mamlūks should assume power:

1. MU‘IZZ AYBAK

His reign began on Saturday 29 Rabi‘ al-Ākhir 648/1250.

Once he had gained power, some of the Mamlūks voiced the opinion that they must have a descendent of the Ayyūbids as Sultan over them. Aybak therefore agreed that they should bring an Ayyūbid called Yūsuf, which they did, giving him the title: Ashraf. However, they did not depose Aybak, but made the two of them partners in power. Aybak consented to this arrangement temporarily, until he was able to attack the leaders of the group and consolidate his power, after which he deposed Yūsuf and had him imprisoned, thus making himself sole ruler.

Aybak did not remain in power long, since Shajarat ad-Durr—who had been his wife—turned against him and ordered the servants

to assassinate him. They did so in 656/1258.

2. MANŞŪR ʿALĪ

The son of Aybak, he assumed power after the assassination of his father, aged eleven. Amir Sinjar al-Ḥalabī governed affairs.

The Vizier of Egypt at that time was Hibat Allāh ibn Şāʿid.

During Manşūr's reign, Hulagu the Tatar conquered Baghdad, killing the Caliph, Muʿtaṣim. News of this had reached Egypt, as well as reports that the enemy intended to advance to Aleppo and take it from the Egyptians. In light of this, the Mamlūk leaders regarded Sultan Manşūr as too young to govern and decided that they needed a strong ruler who could manage their affairs.

They therefore agreed to depose him after two years and eight months.

3. MUẒAFFAR QUTUZ


The Mamlūks agreed to appoint him to power after deposing Manşūr.

He was originally one of the Mamlūks of Muʿizz Aybak.

At that time, they needed to defend their land from the enemy, especially since news had reached them that the vanguard of the latter's armies was in sight of Damascus. Furthermore, Hulagu had written to the ruler of Egypt, demanding obedience and subservience and reminding him of what he had done to all the Mamlūks he had come upon. Quṭuz therefore mustered an army to fight the Tatars. They met the enemy at ʿAyn Jālūt and inflicted an ignominious defeat on the Tatars. This was the first defeat they had suffered since doing what they did to the Muslim lands. There was then a second

battle between the two sides at Baysān (Beit She'an), from which the Egyptians emerged victorious.

As Quṭuz was returning to Egypt victorious and successful, a group of Mamlūks agreed to assassinate him near Ṣālīḥiyyah, which they did.

He was killed  in 658/1260. He had been assassinated by his successor:

4. ZĀHIR BAYBARS

He assumed power following the assassination of Quṭuz.

He was originally one of the Mamlūks of Ṣālīḥ Najm ad-Dīn.

His misdeeds included the assassination of Muẓaffar Quṭuz, who had committed no crime but had defended the land nobly.

At the time of his rule, there was no 'Abbāsīd Caliph to appoint him, according to the normal practice. People objected to this, so when an 'Abbāsīd named Aḥmad who was fleeing the Tatars happened to arrive in 660/1262, Baybars met him and his descent was established by a group of Egyptian scholars. Allegiance was sworn to him as Caliph and he then acknowledged Baybars as Sultan. Thus, Egypt had a Sultan and a Caliph, in whose names addresses were made and coinage struck.

The Caliph took the title: Ḥākim bi-Amri'llāh. He was the forefather of all those caliphs who remained in Egypt throughout the Mamlūk period. He possessed no power whatsoever; the extent of his affair was that the Sultan provided for his subsistence. Sometimes the Caliph would suffice on whatever reached him of the offerings which people brought to the tomb of Sayyidah Nafisah.


The district known in Egypt as the Caliph's Quarter was named after him, since it was where he resided.

One innovation which Ṣāhir Baybars introduced to Egypt was his appointment of four judges—one from each of the legal schools (*madhāhib*), in addition to a deputy. Before this, the Chief Justice had been a Shāfiʿī, with judges from the other three schools acting as his deputies.

Ṣāhir put an end to many reprehensible practices in Egypt and was vehement in abolishing them.

He built the great mosque which is named after him outside Ḥusayniyyah.

He conquered many of the coastal cities of Syria which had been in the hands of the Europeans, such as Caesarea (Qaysāriyyah), Antioch and others.

He renovated the building of the Prophet's  Mosque.

He also renovated many buildings and bridges in Egypt and Syria.

It was he who dug the Ashmūn Canal (in the Daqahliyah Governorate).

People have attached invented stories to his name, which are still related by some story-tellers to this day in traditional coffee shops.

5. SAʿĪD MUḤAMMAD

Son of Ṣāhir Baybars, the Mamlūks appointed him as ruler following the death of his father. However, the amīrs turned against him after he began arresting them. They united and fought him and he stood down from power after two years.

6. ʿĀDIL SULĀMISH

Son of al-Malik aẓ-Ẓāhir [Baybars], the Mamlūks appointed him as ruler after his brother had removed himself from power. He was seven and a half years old at the time and his affairs were governed by Qalāwūn al-Alfī. This remained the case for some five months; then Qalāwūn became greedy for power himself, so he deposed ʿĀdil and made himself ruler.

7. MANŞŪR QALĀWŪN

He assumed power after the deposition of ʿĀdil Sulāmish in 678/1279.

He was originally one of the Mamlūks of Şāliḥ Najm ad-Dīn al-Ayyūb.

Authority over Egypt remained in the hands of his children and grandchildren until the First Mamlūk Dynasty came to an end.

It was this Qalāwūn who built the dome and school between the two palaces, which he called the Hospital (Bīmāristān). Today it is known as the Mosque of Qalāwūn and still contains an ophthalmology clinic which is run by the Endowments Office. Qalāwūn used to spend substantial sums on it.

He also captured Murqub and Jablah from the European Crusaders.

Qalāwūn died in 689/1290. He was interred in the dome of his mosque.

8. ASHRAF KHALĪL

The son of Qalāwūn, he assumed power after his father.

It was he who fought the Europeans at Acre and took it from them in 690/1291, despite its fortified walls.

Having conquered it, he demolished its walls and citadel. He then set out for Jubayl (Byblos) and Bayrūt (Beirut).

Much of the remnants of Acre were transported to Egypt. These included the white marble door which is on the Nāṣiriyyah Madrasah between the two palaces.

In 693/1293, one of the Mamlūk Amīrs revolted and assassinated him, killing him while he was out hunting. His body was later brought and interred in his Madrasah, near the tomb of Sayyidah Naflsah.

9. NĀṢIR MUḤAMMAD IBN QALĀWŪN

The amīrs agreed to appoint him after his brother, Ashraf, at the age of nine. A year after his appointment, some of the Amīrs viewed that the Sultan was too young to be a suitable leader and that it was necessary to depose him and appoint a man capable of governing them. Hence, they removed Nāṣir and appointed:

10. ʿĀDIL K1TBUGHĀ

He was originally a Tatar slave whom Manṣūr Qalāwūn had captured during one of his battles against them.

During his time in power, there was a severe famine in Egypt, due to the low waters of the Nile which failed to surpass twelve cubits and then fell. The famine caused many deaths.

In 696/1296, ʿĀdil went to Syria. Meanwhile, one of the amīrs in Egypt revolted, deposed ʿĀdil and seized power for himself. He was:

11. MANṢŪR LĀJİN

At the start to his reign, he rebuilt the Mosque of Aḥmad ibn Ṭūlūn, which had long stood in ruin without a roof.

In 698/1299, a group of amīrs made a pact to kill Maṣṣūr Lājīn. They did so while he was playing chess.

THE RETURN OF NĀṢIR MUḤAMMAD

This group agreed to reinstate Nāṣir Muḥammad ibn Qalāwūn, who had been exiled to Karak. They sent for him and he returned and took up power for a second time.

Nāṣir fought an immense battle against the Tatar rulers in the vicinity of Aleppo, intending to regain the upper hand against them in order to retake Syria. The Egyptians won a brilliant victory.

This time around, Nāṣir remained in power for ten years. He eventually stood down of his own accord, opting to reside in Karak. The amīrs then took council regarding who to appoint as ruler and reached agreement upon Muḥaffar Baybars al-Jāshnakīr.

12. MUḤAFFAR BAYBARS AL-JĀSHNAKĪR

He was one of the Mamlūks of Sultan Qalāwūn.

There is nothing praiseworthy in his biography. Civil strife increased in Egypt during his reign and the presence of Nāṣir in Karak was a thorn in his side. Muḥaffar sent a threatening message to the latter which motivated Nāṣir to consider returning to power for a third time, in which he was helped by many of the amīrs and soldiers. When Baybars [Muḥaffar] learnt of this, he ceded power.

NĀṢIR'S [SECOND] RETURN

Nāṣir returned to rule Egypt for the third time in 709/1309 and remained as Sultan until 741/1341; that is, some thirty-two years. This makes the total duration of his reign as Sultan of Egypt forty-three years, a period unmatched in length by any other Mamlūk Sultan—or by any other ruler of Egypt, apart from the Fāṭimid Caliph, Mustanṣir.

His reign was one of the best periods under the Mamlūks in Egypt, in which some magnificent buildings were erected.

It was Nāṣir who brought flowing water to the Citadel in Cairo, running its course through a giant aqueduct from the sea to the Citadel. The remains of this system are still extant today and can be visited if one is in the vicinity of Fum al-Khalīj.

In addition, he dug a canal, named after himself, which took water from the Nile and poured into the great canal: al-Khalīj al-Ḥākīmī, at Zuqāq al-Koḥl.

He also dug the Nāṣiriyyah Lake, to which he diverted water from the Nāṣiriyyah Canal. He built a great palace on it and next to it a square on which he used to play polo.

The old Nāṣiriyyah Madrasah was in this vicinity. It was named after him and retained its name when it was relocated.

During his time in power, Nāṣir ended many levies and unjust practices.

Furthermore, no other ruler is known to have had eight of his children assume power. They were:

13. Manṣūr Abū Bakr (ruled: 741/1341–742/1341; deposed)
14. Ashraf Kujuk (ruled: 742/1341–1342; deposed)
15. Nāṣir Aḥmad (ruled: 742–743/1342; deposed)
16. Ṣālīḥ Ismāʿīl (ruled: 743/1342–746/1345; died)
17. Kāmil Shaʿbān (ruled: 746/1345–747/1346; died)

18. Muẓaffar Hajjī (ruled: 747/1346–748/1347; deposed and killed)
19. Nāṣir Ḥasan (ruled: 748/1347–752/1351; this was his first reign)
20. Ṣāliḥ Ṣāliḥ (ruled: 752/1351–755/1354; deposed)

After aṣ-Ṣāliḥ Ṣāliḥ had been deposed, Sultan Nāṣir Ḥasan returned to power for a second time. He remained in power until 762/1361, when some of the amīrs revolted and assassinated him.

It was Nāṣir Ḥasan who built the great Madrasah Complex near the Citadel, known as the Mosque of Sultan Ḥasan, which is one of the strongest structures built during the Mamlūk period.

Much construction took place in Egypt during his reign. For instance, Shaykhū al-ʿUmari¹⁹¹ built his opposing madrasah and mosque in the district of Sallbah. The madrasah is extremely grand, dignified and beautiful. In it, he provided places for the students of religious knowledge to stay, above which he built quarters for those scholars and students who were married. He bequeathed to it significant endowments.

Four of Nāṣir Ibn Qalāwūn's grandchildren came to power. They were:

21. Manṣūr Muḥammad ibn al-Muẓaffar (reigned: 762/1361–764/1363; deposed)
22. Ashraf Shaʿbān ibn Ḥusayn (reigned: 764/1363–778/1377; deposed and killed)
23. Manṣūr ʿAlī ibn Shaʿbān (reigned: 778/1377–783/1381; died)
24. Ṣāliḥ Amīr Ḥajj ibn Shaʿbān (reigned: 783/1381–784/1382; deposed)

Amīr Ḥājj was the last of the descendants of Qalāwūn to assume power and the last of the first Mamlūk Dynasty: the Baḥriyyah Mamlūks of al-Malik aṣ-Ṣāliḥ Najm ad-Dīn Ayyūb.

191 One of the Mamlūk Amīrs of Egypt and the first to be known as Commander-in-Chief in Egypt. He died in 758/1357.

Lesson Forty

THE CIRCASSIAN DYNASTY (DAWLAT ASH-SIRĀKISAH)

After Amīr Ḥājj had been deposed, the amīrs and soldiers agreed upon appointing as Sultan:

1. ZĀHIR BARQŪQ IBN ANAŞ

He had been one of the Mamlūks of Atābakī Yalbughā and was of Circassian origin. He continued to rise up the ranks until he became ruler of Egypt, Syria and the lands around the Two Sanctuaries.

It was he who built the beautifully constructed madrasah, named Jāmi^c Barqūq, in Naḥḥāsīn Street.

As Sultan, he was afflicted by troubles caused by his revolting Mamlūks, to the extent that he was deposed on one occasion. During this interlude, Amīr Ḥājj was reinstated as ruler, while Barqūq vanished for a time. The latter later returned, having endured this calamity, and remained as Sultan until his death in 801/1399.

2. NĀŞIR FARAJ IBN BARQŪQ

Nāşir assumed power after his father as his appointed successor, aged twelve.

His reign witnessed battles between the Egyptians and the Tatar forces. Tamerlane (Tīmūr Lang) captured Aleppo, killing many of its inhabitants, and did the same in Hama (Ḥamāh)—all this, while Nāşir was enjoying his youth. Eventually, he mustered his army and set out for Syria. However, he returned to Egypt before he had

finished with the Tatars, where he learnt of a plot against him on the part of the Mamlūks. Meanwhile, in his absence, Tamerlane entered Damascus and committed atrocities there: killing many of its people, seizing their property and destroying their homes, so that the city lay in such ruin that it was as if it had returned to its desert state. After about three months, Tamerlane left without the Sultan having done anything to protect those poor people.

Nāṣir remained in this condition until he was deposed in 808/1405.

3. MANṢŪR ʿABD AL-ʿAZĪZ IBN BARQŪQ

He was appointed as Sultan after his brother, Nāṣir, aged ten. However, his reign was cut short when his brother sought to make a come back and was helped by some of the Mamlūks to return as Sultan. He remained as such until he estranged the amīrs a second time. This time they deposed him, having fought him for a year (815/1412), and then had him assassinated.

The amīrs then came to an agreement that they would appoint as Sultan the ʿAbbāsīd Caliph, Mustaʿīn bi'llāh al-ʿAbbās ibn Muḥammad al-Mutawakkil. They offered this to him and he accepted. He was proclaimed as Sultan on 17 Muḥarram 815/1412.

Naturally, however, it did not please the Mamlūks to have an Arab appointed as ruler over them. Hence, it occurred to Atābakī Shaykh to depose ʿAbbās. This he did with the help of his army, the former having reigned for six months.

4. MU'AYYAD SHAYKH

Allegiance was sworn to him as Sultan after the ‘Abbāsid Caliph, Musta‘īn bi’llāh, had been deposed in 815/1412. He was originally one of the Mamlūks of Zāhir Barqūq.

It was he who built the great mosque known as Jāmi‘ al-Mu’ayyad, near Bāb Zuwaylah. Its decoration, marble, ceilings and doors were finished to such a high standard that its like had never been seen in Cairo. However, Mu’ayyad wronged the people in obtaining its marble, with his officials raiding houses and quarters for it.

Another of his wrongdoings was to take the door from the Madrasah of Sultan Ḥasan and fit it to his mosque. Likewise, he took the two pillars from the niche of Qawṣūn Mosque, as well as the wood from its roof, which he delivered to those tasked with scraping off its oil.

One of his good deeds was that he completely abolished the fruit levy and had this inscribed in marble, which he placed on the door of the mosque when its construction was complete.

Mu’ayyad was a revered and competent ruler, well-informed about affairs in his dominion, very intelligent and daring in battle. He also used to associate with leading artists, who would then vie with each other in their works to express his excellent understanding and knowledge.

He himself was musically accomplished and the singers of his time performed many of his pieces.

His shortcomings included his loud voice and habit of speaking foolishly.

He died in 824/1421 and was interred in his mosque.

5. MUZAFFAR AḤMAD IBN SHAYKH

He was appointed as ruler after the death of his father, Mu'ayyad, aged one year and eight months. Thus, he was still suckling when the amīrs agreed that he should be Sultan and the Caliph grudgingly acknowledged him as ruler. Governance of his affairs was undertaken by Amīr Ṭaṭar. However, this arrangement did not persist longer than seven months; for Ṭaṭar was desirous to rule himself and, since he found nothing in his way, he deposed Muḏaffar and set himself up as Sultan.

6. ZĀHIR ṬAṬAR

He assumed power having deposed Muḏaffar. He was originally one of the Mamlūks of Zāhir Barqūq. His rule was short—he died after three months and was buried next to the grave of Imām Layth¹⁹².

7. ŠĀLIḤ MUḤAMMAD IBN ṬAṬAR

He was appointed as Sultan after the death of his father in 824/1421, aged eleven. His affairs were managed by the Amīr, Barsbay. As usually occurred, the latter coveted power for himself and deposed ŠāliḤ after three months.

8. ASHRAF BARSBAY

He assumed power after deposing ŠāliḤ MuḤammad in 825/1422. He was originally one of the Mamlūks of Zāhir Barqūq.

Barsbay was a venerable ruler with a splendid retinue.

He was guided by the Shari'ah and loved and associated with the people of sacred knowledge.

He produced what was considered the finest Egyptian coinage.

He established a madrasah in the desert, which is where he was buried.

He was considered in Egypt amongst the best Carcassian Mamlūk rulers.

He died in 841/1437.

9. ʿAzīz YŪSUF IBN BARSBAY

He was appointed to power after the death of his father, aged fourteen. His affairs were managed by Atābakī Jaqmaq, who was in command while the Sultan ruled in name. This state of affairs did not persist for longer than three months, after which Jaqmaq deposed Yūsuf, seeking to rule himself.

10. ZĀHIR JAQMAQ

He assumed power after Yūsuf was deposed in 842/1438. He was originally one of the Mamlūks of Zāhir Barqūq.

He was a great and venerable ruler who was pious, virtuous and humble. He loved religious scholars and was led by the Sharīʿah. He would rise for the scholars whenever they entered his presence.

He also loved orphans and decreed a stipend for them which was sufficient for them to live on.

During his reign, the land was peaceful and free from strife.

In addition, he was an eloquent speaker of Arabic and learned in jurisprudence.

One of his shortcomings was that he was in the habit of listening whatever anyone said—including slander and calumny. This is extremely corrupt. He died in 857/1453.

11. MANŞŪR ʿUTHMĀN JAQMAQ

He was appointed as Sultan after his father, aged nineteen.

At the beginning of his reign, he was in need of money to spend on his soldiers, but there was no more than thirty thousand dinars in his father's treasury. He complained of this to his personal secretary, who extricated him from his distress by way of a wrongful action: he produced dinars each of which was two carats less than the coinage produced by Ashraf, which he named Munāṣarah. He had intended to spend from it on the soldiers, but they became agitated and shunned the Sultan. Following that, they deposed him after forty-three days.

12. ASHRAF ĪNĀL

He was appointed after ʿUthmān had been removed from power. He was originally one of the Mamlūks of Zāhir Barqūq.

He was a simple, lenient and harmless ruler. Were it not for the injustice of his Mamlūks and their aggression towards the populace, he would have been the best of the Carcassian Mamlūk rulers.

He was illiterate—neither able to read nor write. Hence, they would mark edicts for him to run a pen over.

One of the good attributes of his rule was that he did not spill blood unlawfully.

He died in 865/1461 and was interred in his tomb which is in the desert.

13. MUʾAYYAD AḤMAD IBN ĪNĀL

He assumed power after his father, as his appointed successor. However, relations between him and the amīrs were strained and

they revolted against him and deposed him after four months.

14. ZĀHIR KHUSHQADAM

He was appointed as ruler by the amīrs, after they had deposed Aḥmad ibn ināl. He was of Greek origin and had been imported as the Mamlūk of Mu'ayyad Shaykh, to whom his ancestry is ascribed.

The Mamlūks were content with him as ruler and their affairs were in order as long as he gave them their salaries and estates in full.

Once he had established himself as ruler, he arrested many of the amīrs whose malice was to be feared, thereby gaining complete authority.

He was an eloquent speaker of Arabic.

His days were peaceful, although his Mamlūks oppressed the general population. He was also quick to replace members of the judiciary and court officials, and to confiscate their property.

He died in 872/1468.

15. ZĀHIR BALBAY

He assumed power after the death of his father, Khushqadam. He was of Circassian origin and was imported as a Mamlūk for Mu'ayyad Shaykh. He was known as 'Balbay the Mad'.

He did not display the power of a ruler, since he was uncouth and had little knowledge. The amīrs deposed him in his first year of rule.

16. ZĀHIR TIMURBUGHĀ

He was appointed after Balbay was deposed.

He was of Greek origin and had been purchased by Sultan Jaqmaq.

He did not rule for long. The amīrs revolted against him and deposed him after fifty-eight days.

192 Imām Layth ibn ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān al-Fahmī, known informally as Abū’l-Ḥārith. He was the Imām of the people of Egypt during his time, in the sciences of ḥadīth and jurisprudence. He died in 175/791.

Lesson Forty-One

17. ASHRAF QAYTBAY

He was appointed as ruler after Timurbughā was deposed.

He was of Circassian origin and had been purchased by Ashraf Barsbay.

He was one of the longest-ruling Mamlūks, reigning as Sultan for twentynine years, from 872/1468 until 901/1496.

During his reign, the expenditure of the armed forces increased, due to the numerous attackers bent on invading Syrian territories. Ashraf had been confronted by the advance of the so-called Shāh Suwār, who defeated his army a number of times. The Egyptian forces only gained victory against him after hardship and difficulties.

Furthermore, the Ottoman Dynasty (*ad-Dawlah al-ʿUthmāniyyah*) started to expand its power during his time and he feared it as a source of calamity.

The forces which Ashraf mustered required vast expenses; these were distributed amongst the populace, who were compelled to pay their wages.

One lesson to be taken from this is that on one occasion the Sultan ordered a meeting of his counsellors to be convened. These included the ʿAbbāsīd Caliph, the four Supreme Judges, Shaykhs from amongst the religious scholars and all the Mamlūk Amīrs. When they were all gathered, the Sultan's Private Secretary rose and effectively proposed to those assembled that the troops were in need of additional expenditure. He also suggested that many of the populace had an excess of wealth and pay, that there were many

endowments on mosques and great mosques, and that the intention of the Sultan was to leave them enough to perform the religious rites—the rest would be set aside for armed forces expenditure.

The Caliph and Supreme Judge inclined to accepting this proposal, because they knew that it was the Sultan's opinion. While this was underway, Shaykh al-Islām Amīn ad-Dīn al-Aqṣarā'ī al-Ḥanafī¹⁹³ arrived. He was informed of what had taken place and strongly disapproved of it, telling those assembled: "It is not permissible for the Sultan to confiscate people's wealth unlawfully. Therefore, if all the wealth in the exchequer runs out, he should consider what the amīrs and soldiers possess and take from that what he needs. If this proves insufficient, he should consider what is most important: If it is necessary to protect the Muslims, then it is lawful, provided that numerous conditions are fulfilled. This is the Religion of Allāh. If you have listened, may Allāh reward you for that; if you have not listened, do as you please. Truly, we fear from Allāh that He will ask us on the Day of Resurrection why we did not forbid him from doing this and explain to him the Truth; however, if the Sultan wishes to do something which contravenes the Law, then he is not with us."

Then he arose and the Sultan, confused at hearing this answer, disbanded the meeting without accomplishing anything.

The likes of this Shaykh, who speak what they believe of the Truth, are few in all eras. Strangely, the same situation occurred again and the Shaykh did not change his opinion; however, this did not prevent the unjust Sultan from doing what he intended.


Also during his reign, in 880/1475–76, Atābakī Azbak began establishing the Azbakiyyah District, which is traced back to him. It was a patch of derelict, boggy waste land. Azbak built it up,

constructing beautiful courtyards and lofty palaces, having improved its ground and dug a pool to which he diverted water from the Nāṣirī Canal, in addition to a pavement which encircled it. He worked on it himself. Then people began to construct imposing palaces and magnificent places on the pool, after which it became a desirable place to live and was considered a city in its own right.

Qaytbay was numbered amongst the best of the Mamlūks. However, his great failing was that he loved accumulating wealth and coveted the people's property. If it had not been for this, he would have been considered one of the best rulers.

It is said that the total amount which he spent on his troops throughout his reign was 7,065,000 dinars, apart from what he spent on them when they returned from battle.

He had a devotion to learning and he knew the value of people and positioned them appropriately.

He undertook building works which earned him renown, including the Prophet's Mosque [], where he established a great dome over the Prophet's noble grave and a madrasah overlooking the Sanctuary. He similarly established madrasahs in Makkah, Jerusalem, Damascus, Gaza, Damietta and the port of Alexandria. Also in Alexandria, he erected a great tower on the site of the ancient Lighthouse. He also built the great mosque in the desert, known as Jāmi' Qaytbay, as well as other mosques in Cairo. Furthermore, he rebuilt the dome on the tomb of Imām Shāfi'ī, the Bridge of Abū'l-Manjā, the Bridge at Shabrāmīn in Gīzah—where he erected a quay—and the tomb of Sayyid al-Badawī.

He died in 901/1496 and was interred in his tomb in the desert.

18. NĀṢIR MUḤAMMAD IBN QAYTBAY

He was appointed as ruler after his father, aged fourteen, and his affairs were governed by his Atābakī, who was called Qānṣūh al-Ghawrī. It occurred to the latter to depose Nāṣir and be his replacement. He proposed this to the judiciary and some of the amīrs, who agreed to his request. However, some of the Mamlūks were loyal to Nāṣir and fought and defeated Qānṣūh. Hence, the attempt to depose Nāṣir was not executed. However, he did not behave like a ruler, but was fickle and not only thought like a child but used to play like one.

In the end, some of the Mamlūks became exasperated with him and assassinated him in 904/1498.

The days of his reign were filled with trouble and strife, during which the general good was neglected and roads were unsafe—due to the small-mindedness and inconstancy of the Sultan.

19. ZĀHIR QĀNṢŪH

He was appointed as ruler after the assassination of Nāṣir.

He was of Circassian origin and had been a Mamlūk of Qaytbay. The amīrs agreed upon his appointment and the populace were pleased to be rid of his abominable predecessor.

Zāhir's rule was short-lived and he was deposed in 905/1500.

20. ASHRAF JANBALĀṬ

He was appointed as ruler after Qānṣūh had been deposed and was originally a Circassian Mamlūk of Ashraf Qaytbay.

The army were not content with him as ruler. However, one of the amīrs, named Ṭūmān Bay, supported him and facilitated his rule.

Nevertheless, it was the latter who revolted against al-Ashraf in the end and fought him, then deposed him and had him arrested.

His time in power was characterised by confiscation of the people's wealth. He was harsh, tyrannical and oppressive. His reign came to an end in 906/1501.

21. ʿĀDIL ṬŪMĀN BAY

Following the arrest of Janbalāṭ, allegiance was sworn to ʿĀdil ṬŪmān Bay as ruler of Egypt. The people were pleased by his appointment, on account of the tyranny of his predecessor. However, his reign lasted only around three months, after which the Mamlūks revolted against him and he disappeared.

22. ASHRAF QĀNṢŪH AL-GHAWRĪ

He was appointed as ruler after ṬŪmān Bay in 906/1501. He is the builder of the dome which is named after him and in which convenes the blessed organisation that works for the good of the Muslim poor: the Islamic Charitable Society (Al-Janʿiyyah al-Khayriyyah al-Islāmiyyah).

During his era, the power of the Ottomans increased under Sultan Salīm, who turned his interest to conquering Syria, Egypt and the two Sancturaries. Ghawrī advanced to confront him with a great army and the two forces met at Marj Dābiq in Syria. The Egyptians were heavily defeated and Ghawrī was killed in battle on 25th Rajab 922/1516. Then Sultan Salīm departed and took control of Aleppo without resistance.

When the defeated amīrs returned from Marj Dābiq to Egypt, they agreed to appoint ṬŪmān Bay as Sultan.

193 Yaḥyā ibn Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm Abū Zakariyyā Amin ad-Dīn al-Aqṣarāʾī, an eminent Ḥanafī, of Turkish origin, from the town of Aqṣarā. He died in 880/1475.

Lesson Forty-Two

23. ASHRAF ṬŪMĀN BAY

He originated from the Mamlūks of Qaytbay.

Sultan Salīm had conquered all of Syria and advanced with his army, intending to attack Egypt. Ṭūmān Bay mustered the troops and set out from Cairo; then he waited for the advance of the Ottoman army. When they arrived in their great numbers, the Egyptians met them on the edge of Rīdāniyah. There took place a great battle which ended with the defeat of Ṭūmān Bay and those with him. The Ottomans entered Cairo and Sultan Salīm was proclaimed as ruler.

They then hunted down the Mamlūks until they were all but annihilated.

However, Sultan Ṭūmān Bay had not lost hope. He mustered a small band, intending to attempt a return, but was unsuccessful. His reappearance led the Ottomans to commit atrocities of pillaging and looting and to harm the people of Egypt to an extent that they were subject to unimaginable calamities and disasters. The Ottomans began attacking the people in their houses, evicting them and taking up residence there themselves.

Finally, after great effort and trouble, Ṭūmān Bay was arrested and hanged from the city gate: Bāb Zuwaylah. He had ruled for three and a half months.

With his death, the Second Mamlūk Dynasty ended. The total duration of Mamlūk rule had been approximately 275 years.

GENERAL ASPECTS OF THE MAMLŪK DYNASTY

Any remaining legacy of the Mamlūks in Egypt and Syria is attributable to this dynasty.

Consider the great mosques, including those which were institutes for the teaching of sacred knowledge. Find out who built them. You will discover that it was one of the members of the Mamlūk Dynasty—either a ruler or an amīr. Few are attributed to anyone other than them. Perhaps they intended for Allāh to expiate for them through these building works many of the sins which they committed as a result of their government.

Under the Mamlūk Dynasty, the ruler or amīr was free in his dealings with his subjects. If he became angry, there was nothing to stop his anger. If he wished, he killed; and if he wished, he confiscated property, seizing wealth and compromising dependents. There was no one who could say to him: ‘Why did you do this? Why did you kill?’

Often, Allāh would inflict them on one another. Then the ruler would arrest his amīrs, throw them in prison and have them throttled before enjoying their wealth. Alternatively, the amīrs would rise up against the ruler and exterminate him, before appointing someone else.

During the era of the First Mamlūk Dynasty, twenty-one out of twenty-four rulers were either deposed or assassinated, while three died.

As for the Second Mamlūk Dynasty, fifteen out of twenty-three rulers were deposed or assassinated and eight died.

The worst calamities during these events were suffered by the general populace. Their interests were neglected and there was no guarantee of security for their possessions during times of unrest.

As soon as a Mamlūk ruler required capital to meet some need of his, he would give the command for various forms of oppression. Then the money would be raised and the people met with incomparable humiliations. In this way, the populace was raised on fear and terror. Hence, they viewed that their only means of occasionally ridding themselves of the evil inflicted upon them was to lie. This rarely saved them, however, for the various punishments that would rain down upon the body of the denier would extract from him everything he had. Then he would be executed and his wealth wiped out.

Before the Mamlūk period, agricultural lands had been liabilities which people received from the authority responsible for taxing them for a certain amount, from which was deducted whatever the land required in terms of maintaining dams and improving irrigation. The remainder would go to the tax office.

Under the Mamlūks, however, these lands became feudal estates. The resident farmer was known as a peasant and became a serf, enslaved to whomsoever of the soldiers or amīrs had been granted that area—except that he could never hope to be set free or sold. He would remain a slave for as long as he lived and his children likewise.

The oppressive measures which were a means of garnering wealth increased or decreased relative to the justice or injustice of individual rulers. The best of the Mamlūk rulers in this respect was Sultan Nāṣir Muḥammad ibn Qalāwūn, who abolished many of these oppressive measures, despite the great revenues which they had provided to both the treasury and the plunderers.

As for the state of sacred knowledge and its scholars during the Mamlūk era, it was moderate. Many religious scholars emerged in

Egypt during this time, such as: Jalāl ad-Dīn as-Suyūṭī¹⁹⁴, Shaykh al-Imām Zakariyyā al-Anṣārī¹⁹⁵ and others.

However, writing in the Arabic language declined severely, since the dynasty was Turkish and the Sultan did not appreciate any of it, whether of good or poor quality. This contributed not only to its lack of distinction, but to a complete disinterest in it.

In sum, Mamlūk rule over Egypt involved more bad than good. It is sufficient dishonour for the Ummah to have purchased a mamlūk slave for a few dirhams one day, who after a short while became its ruler and master.

¹⁹⁴ ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān ibn Abī Bakr ibn Muḥammad ibn Sābiq ad-Dīn al-Khuḍayrī as-Suyūṭī, Jalāl ad-Dīn, the Imām, ḥadīth expert, historian and man of letters. He died in 911/1505.

¹⁹⁵ Shaykh al-Islām Zakariyyā ibn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Zakariyyā al-Anṣārī as-Sunaykī al-Miṣrī ash-Shāfi‘ī, Abū Yahyā, the judge, exegete and ḥadīth expert. He was born in Sunaykah and died in 926/1520.

Lesson Forty-Three

EGYPT UNDER THE RULE OF THE OTTOMAN DYNASTY (*AD-DAWLAH AL-‘UTHMĀNIYYAH*)

After the Ottoman Dynasty was established by its founder, Sultan ‘Uthmān I, and the shadow of its dominion during the era of the Ottoman Caliphate extended over a great part of Europe and Asia, the dynasty looked to conquer the heart of the Islamic World, comprising of Egypt, Syria, the Two Sanctuaries and Baghdad.

Sultan Salīm I, the ninth Ottoman Sultan, considered attacking the Egyptian Sultanate, thereby uniting what he already possessed with a land of great resources and import. The state of the Mamlūks while he was in power helped him to achieve this wish. He took the Syrian territories and then proceeded to Egypt, where he defeated Sultan Ṭūmān and hanged him from Bāb Zuwaylah. He assumed power over the kingdom of Egypt, making it a province under his authority and doing likewise with Syria and the Ḥijāz.

Sultan Salīm remained in Egypt for some eight months, during which he ordered its affairs and set straight its foundations. He then returned to his seat of power with abundant spoils and numerous craftsmen and manufacturers for whom Egypt was renowned during that period.

He also took with him the last of the ‘Abbāsīd Caliphs in Egypt, Mutawakkil ‘alā’llāh al-‘Abbāsī, having called upon him to relinquish the Caliphate. The latter duly abdicated, forwent its rights and submitted its fate to the Ottoman Sultans.

Sultan Salīm left one of his deputies in Egypt to administer its affairs.

This state of affairs persisted from 923/1517, the year of the Ottoman conquest of Egypt, until 1213/1798, the year of the French conquest. For these two hundred and ninety years, Egypt was in its lowest ever state. By destroying the Mamlūk Sultanate with its good and bad aspects, Sultan Salīm had removed whatever good they had been responsible for and preserved the evil which they had inflicted upon the people. The Mamlūk soldiers had merely been replaced by other soldiers whose only concerns were corruption, evil and disobeying orders.

Indeed, they were only interested in stealing wealth and plundering the people's property heedlessly, and were charged with sending the Sultan half of whatever tax they obtained. Consequently, Egypt was a stage for sedition and unrest, while its inhabitants subsisted in the most wretched state and emaciated form of existence. For as long as the Bedouin seized the opportunity for strife between the soldiers and their leaders, the people continued to be afflicted with their calamities and their lives and wealth were controlled, with nothing to protect them.

The situation worsened when, in 1027/1618, the Ottoman State sent four thousand soldiers who had been banished from the seat of government having rebelled. The Governor of Egypt was charged with dispatching them to Yemen on their arrival in Egypt. However, when they disembarked in Egypt and were requested to travel on, they refused, closing the city gates of Bāb al-Futūḥ and Bāb an-Naṣr and setting up barricades in the roads and streets. They also took possession of many homes, joining them together. The Governor deployed a force against them and the two sides fought a fierce battle. Strife within the military continued until 1035/1626,

accompanied by the savage price increases and complete loss of security which this entailed.

In 1037/1627–28, when Muḥammad Pasha was Vizier, he designated soldiers to travel to Abyssinia, accompanying the Amīr, Qānṣūh. They set up camp in ‘Abbāsiyyah and began kidnapping boys and girls, snatching passers-by, stealing and looting until the roads became impassable. This became unbearable for the people, who were afflicted by troubles from all around and could find no help.

These calamities were not limited to the actions of the soldiers and Bedouin; rather, many of the amīrs thought of nothing but means of harming the people and collecting their wealth. Such was the case with Aḥmad Pasha, who was nicknamed Rāmī an-Nuḥās (the Copper-thrower). He collected a large amount of copper, intending to have it made into coinage. He then set up stoves in Ḥawsh Bardaq (or: Aqbardī), established foundries and brought manufacturers. However, none of what he had hoped came to pass. Hence, he threw it all at the traders, craftsmen and itinerants. As a result, the people suffered unsurpassed distress and hardship.

In addition, he was the worst of the rulers for bribing people, and then persisting as if it were an established right.

In 1071/1660–61, the Battle of the Banners was fought, a great battle in which the amīrs split into factions. The fires of war were lit in the streets and suburbs of Cairo and spread to the provinces. The Governor mustered numerous troop detachments, with the result that most of the Fiḳāriyyah Amīrs (named after their leader, Dhū’l-Fiḳār) were killed and their attack came to nothing.

After that, people came to Egypt from Syria, most of them Greeks or Druze, and entered the military. Some of them attained high

ranks and joined Muḥammad Bak Ḥākim Jurjā, becoming his supporters. They took to oppressing and assaulting the people, perpetrated much stealing and plundering, and used to kill people for the least reason. The people complained to the Governor, who rebuked them. However, this did not restrain them and they increased their oppression, attacking the people. Hence, the Governor was forced to fight them. He surrounded them in the Mosque of Mu'ayyad, where they had fortified themselves, and fought them fiercely. Many people were killed during the confrontation and numerous buildings destroyed in Sukriyyah, Dawādiyyah, Qaṣbat Riḍwān, ad-Darb al-Aḥmar, Taḥt ar-Rab^c and the neighbouring vicinity. Eventually, the Governor overpowered them and they were captured and killed.

In 1179/1766, 'Alī Bak al-Kabīr became autonomous ruler of Egypt and deposed the state-appointed Pasha. He became increasingly powerful until his Mamlūk, Muḥammad Bak Abū'dh-Dhahab (founder of the mosque opposite al-Azhar), rebelled against him. The two fought and Muḥammad Bak emerged victorious and ruled independently. However, he did not remain in power long and was succeeded by Murād Bak and Ibrāhīm Bak, who ruled arbitrarily and took to attacking the amīrs and others. When the amīrs rose against them, they mustered their Mamlūks but were defeated and escaped to the southern regions.

Ismā'īl Bak then took power for himself. However, Murād Bak and Ibrāhīm Bak were not finished. They bided their time until they were prepared. Thereafter, battles between the two sides were ongoing until Ismā'īl Bak was vanquished and Murād and Ibrāhīm returned. They were unable to agree, however.

In 1199/1785, there was widespread suffering in Egypt due to the plague. It was a time of incomparable hardship, owing to price

increases, death, civil strife and the low waters of the Nile. This was in addition to the many confiscations, oppressive acts and infringements of the amīrs, and the dispersal of their followers throughout the regions to collect wealth from the villages and towns. They introduced new means of oppression, until they had destroyed civilised life, leaving crops diminished and people's lives intolerable. Their distress was severe and the peasants left their lands, so that most of the countryside was laid waste. When the oppressors realised that the peasants were of no use to them, they turned their demands upon the tax farmers, sending bailiffs to their houses. These blameless people were required to sell their possessions, dwellings, livestock and enclosures, in addition to suffering from excessive confiscations. They pursued anyone from whom they smelt the scent of the wealthy, seized and imprisoned him and then charged him with far more than he could bear. They also systematically demanded loans from the coffee and spice merchants in the form of future levies.

Ibrāhīm also coveted inheritances, so his followers would surround a deceased person's descendants—whether or not they had inherited anything.

Eventually, the exchequer became one of the positions to which the worst of people were appointed, with all the wealth it paid out every month. Thereafter, such a person would meet no opposition to whatever he did in terms of particulars. As for major issues, these were dealt with by the Amīr himself. Consequently, the people were afflicted with indescribable hardships and tribulations. This persisted until the countryside and its families were destroyed, the roads were cut off, there was no longer any security and it was impossible to travel without protection and in a vehicle. Peasants came to the cities with their women and children, clamouring from hunger and

eating the melon skins and leaves that fell in the streets, so that in the end the rubbish collectors had nothing to sweep up. Eventually, their hardship became so great that they ate dead horses, donkeys and mules. Many others died of starvation. Nevertheless, the amīrs continued to loot the cities, while their men plundered the countryside, with no one to protect their inhabitants.

All this occurred in these lands during the days of those lawless Mamlūks who had nothing to deter them. Such was the case until Allāh, Exalted is He, permitted some change in these conditions at the hands of the French State. Their entering Egypt is considered the beginning of a loosening of the power of those Mamlūks who were uninhibited by religion or reason, in 1213/1798.

Lesson Forty-Four

EGYPT UNDER FRENCH RULE

In the month of Muḥarram, 1213/1798, French troops entered the city of Alexandria under the leadership of Napoleon Bonaparte.

When Murād Bak learnt of this, he mustered a force to confront them. They met him at Raḥmāniyyah in Baḥīrah Governorate and routed him, following him to Anbābah. There the two sides fought a battle which lasted no more than three quarters of an hour, ending in defeat for Murād Bak.

Thereafter, French troops entered Cairo and took up residence in the houses of the Mamlūk Amīrs. Bonaparte himself resided in the house of Muḥammad Bak al-Alfī, in Azbakiyyah, while his commanders each took whichever of the houses of the Mamlūk Amīrs best pleased them.

At first, the French treated the Egyptians with flexibility and friendliness. However, the situation later changed and their treatment became harsh. People were obliged to pay them money which they said was a loan and would be repaid. This caused severe constraints for the poor. The French also employed much injustice and tyranny in their search for Mamlūk wealth and trusts: Their soldiers would enter houses and plunder their contents without regard. The people, beset by trouble and fear, were in a state of confusion. If they remained in Cairo, they witnessed the injustices of the French; and if they left the city, they were exposed to the abominable acts of the Bedouin and the soldiers of Murād Bak and Ibrāhīm Bak.

Then they formed a council made up of six Muslim leaders and six of their counterparts from amongst the Christian merchants to

investigate deeds of property. They also decided on sums to be taken from inheritances, transactions and legal proceedings. People suffered from these fines to the extent that they were affected by them. Their distress and complaints increased, but there was no one to aid or help them.

Once dislike had been established between the people of Egypt and the French, the latter began to take precautionary measures for themselves. They demolished numerous buildings around the citadel and increased the thickness of the city gate: Bāb al-ʿAzab in Rumaylah. In addition, they changed its markings, effacing any trace that had been there of rulers, religious scholars and signs of the Sultans, as well as the weapons, shields, axes and spears which the doors carried. Inside the citadel, they destroyed the Palace of Yūsuf Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn.

Meanwhile, demands for money from the countryside were ongoing and the alteration of decrees continuous. As a result, the people of the region met hardships of unprecedented severity and magnitude during this period. The Bedouin would attack the towns and seize whatever they found of the wealth of their inhabitants. They were followed by the Ghuzz¹⁹⁶, who would steal and plunder. Then the French would come, killing and behaving immorally. The people were unable to bear such circumstances—especially the people of Cairo, who congregated in a street between the two palaces, set up barricades in some quarters and engaged in skirmishes with the French. The canons fired in that direction and at the Mosque of al-Azhar. A large number of houses were destroyed, many people were dispersed and many others died. Thereafter, the French treated the Egyptians even more harshly and imposed new taxes on them. These they collected in any way they could. They emptied the district of

Azbakiyyah of its inhabitants and lodged their men there, along with those Syrian and Coptic Christians who joined them.

The total duration of the French occupation of Egypt was three years and eleven days, from 9 Şafar 1213/1798 until 21 Şafar 1216/1801, a period which was permeated with the many forms of oppression which the ‘civilised’ French employed as a result of the adverse exchanges between them and the Egyptians. Under their rule, Egypt did not have a day’s respite from the incessant fines that were imposed on its people, and the complete loss of all security.

They were expelled at the hands of the Vizier, Yūsuf Pasha, whom the Ottoman State had sent in order to free Egypt, with the help of English troops who were Ottoman allies in this campaign. The day of their expulsion from Egypt was a momentous one for the Egyptians, who received Yūsuf Pasha with joy and jubilation, hoping that the common good would be served by the change.

One of the most evil acts which the Egyptians remember being committed by the French was their degradation of al-Azhar Mosque, after it and the surrounding streets and quarters had provided a refuge for the people and their property.

1216/1801-1220/1805

During this period, the situation in Egypt did not become calmer; rather, trouble increased and unrest became more widespread. Many of the houses and suburbs of Old Cairo were destroyed and the people—particularly merchants and the well-off—suffered indescribable hardship as a result of taxes and expenditure. This was especially the case throughout the era of the first Governor of this period, Muḥammad Pasha, who was known as Abū Maraḡ.

He entered Egypt with a lavish retinue and the people celebrated his arrival, thinking that they would gain some ease and security. Their hopes were dashed, however, due to his neglect of the general interest. The Christians and Greeks who had been with the French and had caused harm to the Muslims joined the Arna'ūd army, along with other soldiers and those Turks who were in the country, and began wreaking havoc and starting fights all over Cairo. They robbed the city's inhabitants, evicted them and took over their homes and employed various stratagems for looting. For instance, a soldier might sit outside a shop, pretending to rest or purchase something; then he would leave, only to return shortly afterwards, claiming to have forgotten his bag or lost a dirham. He would use this as a pretext for humiliating the shop's owner and stealing everything he had. Corruption was widespread: they shared in whatever the salesman sold and partook of the merchant's profits. The grip tightened around the people's necks and the scope of their oppression widened, especially in rural areas, until the severity of these difficulties came to a head, when the Military Judge—may Allāh not forgive him—stated that all properties had been placed under state ownership, since victory against the French was considered a new conquest.

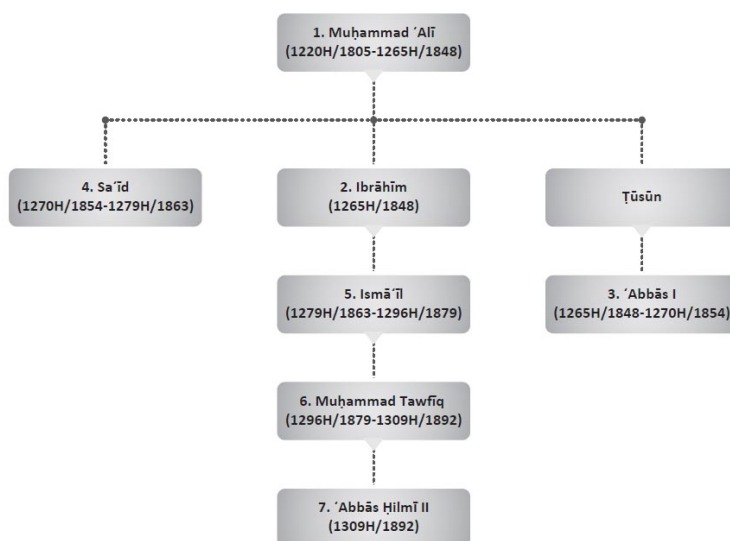
The religious scholars objected, however, and property owners raised an uproar and made many complaints, until his decree was not enforced.

Nevertheless, the Pasha increasingly confiscated the properties of anyone he suspected of being wealthy, as well as raising charges on merchants and others.

The situation remained this way or worse—including aspects which are indescribable—until Allāh permitted the termination of these disasters and the end of Mamlūk rule in Egypt. The land then entered a new era, in which peasants could smell the freedom which

had long been absent. All this occurred at the hands of that great hero, Ḥājī Muḥammad ‘Alī Pasha, founder of the ‘Alawiyyah Dynasty in Egypt—may Allāh preserve and protect it and benefit the land through it.¹⁹⁷

He assumed power in the month of Ṣafar, 1220/1805.



The Family of Muḥammad ‘Alī

1. MUḤAMMAD ‘ALĪ

Muḥammad ‘Alī Pasha assumed power in Egypt when the links in the chain which locked the country in discord were strong, a chain of events that would be difficult to break. Turmoil was widespread: the Bedouin were starting fights everywhere; gangs of thieves had cut off the roads; soldiers were causing all manner of calamities for the people; and meanwhile, the Egyptian amīrs were wreaking havoc and destruction throughout the land. Whenever soldiers were sent to fight them, they only added to their corruption on account of the enmity

that existed between the various corps: the Arna'ūd were rivals of the Inkishāriyyah¹⁹⁸; the Dalāt¹⁹⁹ were enemies of all other corps; and all were enemies of the people, disobedient to the Governor.

This was the state of Egypt when that hero first took control.

First he started winning over the hearts of people of influence, such as Sayyid 'Umar Makram²⁰⁰, Shaykh Sharqāwī²⁰¹ and Shaykh Dawākhilī, until they were on his side. Then he began to seek their help in solving problems.

There was nothing opposing his attempts to improve the situation in Egypt other than the Mamlūk leaders, who continued to spread corruption in the land. His first concern was therefore to be rid of them. It happened that the Wahhābī revolt²⁰² was occurring simultaneously in the Ḥijāz. When the Wahhābīs captured the Two Sanctuaries, the Ottoman state asked Muḥammad 'Alī to send an Egyptian army to take back the sacred lands. The Amīr made ready for this, establishing an arsenal at Būlāq to produce boats. He had a number of these manufactured and sent by camel to Suez (Suways), where they were constructed. He himself went there in 1225/1810-11, before returning and appointing his son, Ṭūsūn, as commander of the army which he had mustered to travel.

He made it known that he intended to celebrate his son's being dressed in the robe of honour which the Ottoman state had sent him and announced this to all the amīrs in the land. They were told to be in the citadel at four o'clock on Friday (5th Ṣafar 1226/1811). They all attended without delay. However, the order had already been given for their assassination. When the retinue had gathered, those in line proceeded until the amīrs were confined between the gate of Bāb al-ʿAzab and the upper opening of the pass. A signal was then given to the men waiting on either side, who fired their guns. Bullets struck the amīrs from right and left and from behind. They could see the

gate blocked in front of them and the way of retreat cut off. None of them escaped. The killing went on from high noon until evening. Then the soldiers pursued the amīrs who were in the countryside and finished them off. The only ones to escape were those who fled to Sudan or hid until they died. In addition, their homes were looted and the Arna'ūd took possession of their wealth.

Afterwards, Muḥammad 'Alī toured the country, guaranteeing the people's security. With this, he considered himself a true Amīr of Egypt, with no one to prevent him from improving its state. Thus, he began to extricate Egypt from its morass.

At first, he made it his priority to please the Supreme State, so as to avoid encountering resistance to his aims from it in future. He therefore dispatched the force which had been mustered to the Ḥijāz, led by his son Ṭūsūn. The latter went and suppressed the Wahhābī revolt, retook from them Makkah and Madīnah and obtained the keys to the Two Sanctuaries.

After this had been achieved, Muḥammad 'Alī Pasha himself travelled to the Ḥijāz in the month of Shawwāl, 1228/1813. He put the affairs of the Ḥijāz in good order, arrested Sharīf Ghālib²⁰³ and replaced him with his nephew, Yaḥyā ibn Surūr²⁰⁴. He remained in the Ḥijāz until the month of Jumādā ath-Thānīyah, 1230/1815, when he returned, having completed his business there. This was cause for the Ottoman State's complete satisfaction with him.

Thereafter, he was interested in establishing in Egypt a system which would enable it to develop in the manner of an important and powerful state.

He built fortresses in Alexandria, Rashīd (Rosetta) and Dumyāt.

He was concerned with securing the roads and supporting the merchants against the Europeans and others. Eventually, they were

reassured and settled in the port of Alexandria, bringing all manner of trade to Egypt.

After that, he focussed on what he considered his utmost priority: to restructure the Egyptian military along the lines of European armed forces. In this, he encountered difficulties at first, but overcame them with sagacity. He sought the help of two Europeans: Marie and Sayf; the latter later embraced Islām and was promoted, becoming known as: Sulaymān Pasha al-Faransāwī ('the French'). The reorganisation and training took place far from Cairo. Then, after two years, the armed forces entered Cairo, organised in a fashion which astonished the people. This was the first distinction realised by the Egyptian peasants, since they formed the country's defense force—whereas before they had been like commodities controlled by the military.

Next, he turned his attention to establishing naval fleets, of which he created several. In this, he sought help from a group of Europeans, whom he placed in the navy's service. He also founded a naval school, in which he enrolled a group of Egyptian youth and employed skilled instructors.

After that, he founded the School of Medicine in the district of Abū Zaʿbal. Here, he appointed the expert, Clot Bak, who is still known to ordinary Egyptians through the street which was named after him in Cairo.

In short, he was the first to place the seed of knowledge in the minds of Egyptians. To do so, he employed harsh methods, because Egyptians at this time did not understand their own interests; hence, they were educated by force. We now see how the fruit ripened.

In addition to his concern for this cultural development, he took great interest in material matters. For instance, he exerted great efforts to improve irrigation, laying the foundations for the

remarkable dam at the apex of the Nile Delta. Known as al-Qanāṭir al-Khayriyyah (the Benevolent Bridges), it was—and remains—a source of benefit for the people of the Nile Delta, enabling them to irrigate their lands easily, especially since it was improved by the addition of irrigation canals for disseminating the water.

Furthermore, Muḥammad ‘Alī was the first to introduce cotton farming to Egypt, under the guidance of a Frenchman named Jumel. Soon afterwards, he sold his crop of some two hundred thousand kantars to the Europeans. This is the same cotton which is central to Egyptian wealth today.

In addition, he brought in indigofera, opium and sugar cane. He also had factories built and workshops renovated for spinning the cotton and opened new roads and planted trees around Cairo.

In sum, he laid a sound foundation for removing that country from the darkness of ignorance and bringing it into the light of knowledge, to enable its people to break out of poverty and devastation and reach the summit of wealth and civilisation.

It was he who conquered the territories of Sudan and annexed them to those of Egypt.

One thing of which the author does not approve is the great war which took place between Muḥammad ‘Alī and the Supreme State.

It resulted from a difference between Muḥammad ‘Alī and the Governor of Syria, ‘Abdullāh Pasha, which led to the former sending his Egyptian armed forces to take Syria from the latter. They duly conquered Syria under the leadership of Amīr Ibrāhīm ibn Muḥammad ‘Alī. When the Ottoman State became aware of this, they sought to block it by dispatching troops to confront him. He defeated them twice, once near Homs (Ḥumṣ) and another time near Ba‘lbak.

When this reached the ears of Sultan Maḥmūd, he was inclined to keep peace with Muḥammad ‘Alī. The latter, however, stipulated that

everything he had conquered should remain under his rule—a condition which was unacceptable to the Sultan. Instead, he sent a great army to confront the Egyptians. The two forces met near Konya, where the Egyptians won a great victory, capturing Muḥammad Rashīd Pasha, Commander of the Turkish troops. On learning of this, the Sultan sought help from the European nations. Talks were finalised with the Treaty of Kutahiya, signed on 14th March 1833/1248H. It included the stipulation that the Governorates of Egypt and Syria should remain under the control of Muḥammad ‘Alī, while Aden (‘Adan) and the Two Sanctuaries were to be governed by his son, Ibrāhīm.

However, he had not been apprised of the situation in Syria. The Druze were against him, while the Maronites supported him. He therefore utilised the latter against the former, until he had succeeded in extinguishing those revolts.

As for the Ottoman State, it continued to prepare to clash with the Egyptian forces who were camped in Syria. An army was mustered under the command of Ḥāfiẓ Pasha and dispatched to Syria, where they fought the Egyptian forces in the vicinity of Nuṣaybīn. The battle resulted in an Egyptian victory.

At that time, Sultan Maḥmūd died and was succeeded by Sultan ‘Abd al-Majīd. Then Muḥammad ‘Alī viewed it best to solve the issue peacefully. Hence, intelligence officers passed between the two sides until an agreement had been reached on condition that Russia, Prussia, England and France were forbidden from dissolving it. Not long after that, Muḥammad ‘Alī received a decree confirming him as ruler of Egypt, in which he was to be succeeded by his sons, and as ruler of Acre for the remainder of his life. Muḥammad ‘Alī was angry and discontent with this and demanded control over all of Syria, but the intervening nations refused and conspired against his forces in

Syria to compel them to return to Egypt. Ibrāhīm was therefore forced to retreat, having suffered severely.

At this point, the Sultan signed the historic agreement on 12th January 1841/1256H. Its conditions included that Muḥammad ‘Alī would be ruler of Egypt for the remainder of his life and would be succeeded by his eldest sons and descendants.

It also stipulated that he would assign eighty thousand bags to the storehouses annually and that the number of Egyptian troops would not exceed eighteen thousand—on condition that their uniforms were the same as those of the Sultan’s troops.

Thus ended the matter and Muḥammad ‘Alī Pasha’s mind was put at ease after those long wars.

Muḥammad ‘Alī’s legacy includes the great mosque within the Mountain-top Citadel, where he was interred.

Muḥammad ‘Alī remained ruler of Egypt until he was afflicted by an illness which forced him to relinquish government of the country to his son and heir, Amīr Ibrāhīm Pasha.

196 Ghuzz: a Turkish tribe.

197 See figure: The Family of Muḥamad ‘Alī.

198 ‘Inkishāriyyah’ is the name of the Ottoman army established by Urkhān I and is a corruption of the Turkish: *yanī kishayrī* (janissary), meaning: new order.

199 The Dalāt were a type of janissary, tasked with communications, guarding the border and acting as guides. When they became superfluous to the Ottoman army, they turned into dissenting elements.

200 ‘Umar Makram ibn Ḥusayn as-Suyūṭī, a popular Egyptian leader from a noble family. He was born in Asyūṭ and died in

1237/1822.

201 ‘Abdullāh ibn Ḥijāzī ibn Ibrāhīm ash-Sharqāwī al-Azhārī, a jurist from amongst the scholars of Egypt. He was born in the village of Ṭawīlah and died in 1227/1812.

202 The Wahhābīs trace their origins to ‘Abd al-Wahhāb an-Najdī, who emerged in the Arabian Peninsula with his famous Salafī mission. He died in 1206/1792.

203 Sharīf Ghālib ibn Musā‘id ibn Sa‘id al-Ḥasanī, Amīr of Makkah. He died in 1231/1816.

204 Yaḥyā ibn Surūr ibn Musā‘id ibn Sa‘id ibn Sa‘d ibn Zayd Sharīf Ḥasanī, Amīr of Makkah. He died in 1252/1836.

Lesson Forty-Five

2. IBRĀHĪM PASHA

Under his father's rule, he was the pride of the Egyptian army. After his father retired, the edict came from the Sublime Porte that he should assume government of Egypt. His time in power was shortlived, however, as he died after eleven months in 1265/1848.

3. ʿABBĀS PASHA I

He was the grandson of Muḥammad ʿAlī, son of his son, Ṭūsūn.

He assumed power after the death of his uncle, Ibrāhīm, as the eldest of Muḥammad ʿAlī's descendents.

During his reign, his grandfather, Muḥammad ʿAlī, died, in the month of Ramaḍān, 1266/1850. He was interred in the mosque in the Mountain-top Citadel.

ʿAbbās was concerned for the state of security in the country, to the extent that he would punish on the basis of accusations and would walk the streets of Egypt secretly, observing the condition of its people. He loved the saints (*awliyāʾ*), especially the family of the Prophet ﷺ, for whom he would hold charitable evenings in their mosques.

Such was the case until he died a martyr in his palace, which he had built, in 1270/1854.

4. MUḤAMMAD SAʿĪD PASHA

The son of Muḥammad ‘Alī, he assumed power after the death of his nephew, ‘Abbās.

He had previously been Captain of the Navy, having been trained in that field.

He loved militarism and was passionately fond of all the Egyptian armed forces, showering them with his favours. He was only at ease when he was with them and amongst them, and he promoted many of them.

He would be presented with issues and tasks whilst he was in their company—they did not leave his side, wherever he stayed or went. He often moved between Cairo and Alexandria accompanied by them, then proceeding to Maryūt and Qaṣr an-Nīl.

One of the great accomplishments of his era was the opening of the Suez Canal, connecting the Red Sea to the Mediterranean and dividing Asia and Africa. It was expected to be of great benefit to Egypt; however, the Europeans favoured themselves with these benefits—the French and the English taking the greatest of them.

His greatest exploits included Sa‘īd’s Farmland Law, which granted peasants security over the land which they possessed, encouraging them to improve and farm it.

Another was Sa‘īd’s Pension Law, from which employees benefitted immensely.

He died on 27th Rajab 1279/1863 in Alexandria.

5. ISMĀ‘ĪL PASHA

The second son of Ibrāhīm, son of Muḥammad ‘Alī, he was born in 1245/1830.

He became Khedive of Egypt following the death of his uncle, Sa‘īd Pasha, on 28th Rajab 1279/1863, aged thirty-four.

It was he who widened the scope of Egyptian commerce and increased the branches of the railway and telegraph.

Under his rule, the number of schools in Egypt rose.

He also reformed the publishing houses: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Arabiyyah and Dār al-Āthār al-Miṣriyyah.

Having built the city of Ismā‘iliyyah, he turned his attention to Cairo, to which he brought order by widening its streets and establishing great buildings, such as the Opera House in Cairo, in addition to Zizīniyā in Alexandria.

He also erected grand palaces.

During his era, the Suez Canal opened officially. The government spent a vast sum on the celebration. All these projects, in addition to Ismā‘il’s own expenditure, caused him to extend his hand in the direction of Europe to borrow the funds he required. He was lent whatever he asked for with exorbitant rates of interest. The country never obtained the benefits from that account book that were commensurate to the burden it placed upon the budget.

In the end, the financial situation in Egypt was in turmoil and the lenders feared for their money. Ismā‘il was therefore forced to resign in Rajab 1296/1879, following seven years of rule.

During his era, the mode of succession to the Khedivate changed. Previously, the eldest member of the ‘Alawiyyah family had been first in line; thereafter, it was the eldest of Ismā‘il’s sons, and then the eldest son of whomever ruled as Khedive after him.

6. MUḤAMMAD TAWFĪQ PASHA

The eldest son of Ismā‘il Pasha, he was born on Thursday 10th Rajab 1269/1853. He became ruler of Egypt after the resignation of his father on 17th Rajab 1296/1879, aged twenty-seven.

Under his ﷺ command, an age of improvement in conditions for the peasant began. He abolished many taxes, which had been so numerous and varied that the peasants did not know where they were from the amount of demands placed upon them. He then ordered the formation of the Settlement Committee, which guaranteed the lenders their money, whilst protecting peasant rights with respect to what they paid in repayments. He distributed the instalments to be paid across the farm estates at specific times and ended the previous harsh methods of collection, as well as the practice of attaching the debt to the land, to be sold with it if the owner failed to keep up with his repayments. Then the peasant was able to breathe the fresh air of life and guarantee his own security and security for his wealth.

Muḥammad Tawfīq then put his mind to the matter of education. Schools of various classes were opened and the sphere of secondary level education was broadened. During his era, the Dār al-‘Ulūm Madrasah was opened and the Tawfīqiyyah Madrasah, Khadīwiyyah Madrasah and others were founded.

To ensure the most important aspects of improving the situation and guaranteeing for the populace justice in issues between them, he turned his attention to establishing regular courts. The people were thereby guaranteed their rights.


He was also concerned with irrigation, because it was the buttress of the wealth of that region. Canals were renovated and dams built. Forced labour and serfdom were removed from the peasants, while purifying and establishing the canals became the task of the government, who undertook it themselves.

In addition, he ordered the creation of a House of Representatives, so that the people themselves could participate in

elevating themselves and improving their situation.


Matters proceeded in this way of development and success, until the ‘Urābī Revolt, which set back anticipated progress. The country remained in a state of unrest until the revolt was ended by English occupation. It also resulted in an increase in the country’s debts.

Thereafter, the government renewed its attempts at reform and elevation of the society in a manner that was commendable. However, following the end of the revolt, they decided to dissolve the House of Representatives, replacing it with the Legislative Council and the Provincial Councils.

Khedive Tawfīq  remained on the throne of Egypt until he died in the city of Ḥulwān, in 1309/1892. He was brought to Cairo and buried in the area of ‘Afīfī.

Lesson Forty-Six

7. ‘ABBĀS ḤILMĪ II

On 8th January 1892/8th Jumādā ath-Thānīyah 1309H, our leader, ‘Abbās Ḥilmī Pasha II ascended the throne of the Emirate of Egypt, following the death of his father, Muḥammad Tawfīq Pasha .

His era in Egypt is a very splendid one, if compared with the eras of his predecessors from amongst his forefathers—may Allāh cover them with His Mercy. As for what came before that, it is a golden age in comparison. We ask Allāh to always increase his goodness for us and to make our journey under him one of advancement.

During this era, the peasant has obtained his freedom and security for himself and his wealth. It is not the place of the ruler to encroach upon any of these. Rather, he is free to plant his land with whichever crops he chooses from which to gain strength and profit (apart from tobacco). Nothing is asked of him except a specific, regulated tax. The numerous forms of oppression with which he was insupportably burdened have been removed. Likewise, he is free to deal with his wealth as he chooses, guided by his own mind. Finally, he is free in himself, and his freedom may not be stolen from him, unless by common right—as judged by regular and just courts.

Nothing afflicts the people, apart from bad people themselves. They are the ones who disturb the order, due to their poor education. This is a situation which must improve when education becomes the endeavour of all involved in it.

The craftsman is also free in the choice of work by which he earns his living. If his resolve is true and his spirit high, he will

benefit both society and himself. On the other hand, if he is sluggish and lazy, with no concern beyond satiating his hunger, then he will be content with work which is lowly and contemptible.

During this era, the government has been concerned to reform education and make it available to all levels of society. Hence, it has focussed on the matter of the *kuttābs*, where Egyptian peasants encounter their first education. As such, they are the first port of reform for the Egyptian; when they are improved, he is improved and elevated.

The government has taken equal interest in primary, preparatory and high schools, which has resulted in an increase in the number of educated people. The government has been supported in this by groups of Egyptian philanthropists, who established organisations for the promotion and advancement of education in all levels of society: Al-Jam‘iyyah al-Khayriyyah al-Islāmiyyah, headed by the Prime Minister, the honourable Amīr Ḥusayn Kāmil Pasha, uncle of the august Amīr; Jam‘iyyat al-‘Urwat al-Wuthqā in Alexandria; Jam‘iyyat al-Musā‘ī al-Mashkūrah in Shibīn al-Kawm; as well as other charitable organisations, all of which work together to promote education.

The august Amīr has also devoted himself to al-Azhar ash-Sharīf, the greatest institute of religious learning in Egypt.

Society has worked together to establish a university, which we ask will have a noble future.

In sum, this era brings us tidings of the best future. We ask Allāh to grant long life to our master, the august Amīr, and to guide him in speech and deed, so that he is the greatest support to the people of Egypt in achieving the happiness they hope for²⁰⁵.

205 ʿAbbās Ḥilmī II was removed from his position as ruler in Shawwāl 1332/1914. He died in retirement in 1363/1944. He was succeeded by his uncle, Sultan Ḥusayn Kāmil, who remained in power until the beginning of the month of Ṣafar, 1335/1916. He was followed by Aḥmad Fuʿād ibn Ismāʿīl, known as King Fuʿād, until 1355/1936; then his son, King Fārūq, who was overthrown by the Revolution in 1952/1371H.

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Lessons in Islamic History is an essential summary of Shaykh Muḥammad Khudārī Bak's series of groundbreaking works on Islamic history, in which this pioneering Egyptian historian and scholar of Shari'ah and Arabic literature distils the essence of his three outstanding works on the Prophetic Biography, the Rightly-Guided Caliphs and the Umayyad and 'Abbāsīd Dynasties. In his distinctively eloquent yet uncomplicated style, he traces the changing political and social circumstances of the Islamic peoples from their origins in the pre-Islamic Arabian Peninsula until his own time in the Ottoman Khedivate of Egypt.

An instinctive educator who explained that he wrote not merely to record history, but so that history might benefit, the author outlines the vicissitudes of Islamic history with refreshing objectivity and restraint, highlighting the lessons to be learnt from past events. In an era when competing historical narratives vie for supremacy, this text provides a clear and concise account of Muslim leadership throughout history and its consequences for the Ummah. As such, it is an indispensable read for young and old alike.

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*A community receives light from
its history, and it becomes aware of
itself by remembrance of its history*

– Allama Iqbal –



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